Report by Livia Lupi

THE ACADEMIC BOOK OF THE FUTURE

Archaeology and History of Art Symposium

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University of York

As Marilyn Deegan explained in her welcome remarks, this symposium sits within the wider context of the Academic Book of the Future Project, a two-year enterprise bringing together UCL, King's College London, and the AHRC. The aim of the York symposium was to bring together academics, publishers and librarians in order to reflect upon some of the pressing issues at the heart of the Academic Book of the Future Project: what is an academic book? How are new technologies affecting the way academics conduct their research and engage with their readership? What preservation challenges do digital media present? This event offered an opportunity to discuss these and other questions in a debate specifically aimed at research and publishing within History of Art and Archaeology.

History of Art Panel

The first panel of the day, chaired by **Mark Jenner** (Reader in Early Modern History, University of York), was dedicated to History of Art. **Jeanne Nuechterlein** (Senior Lecturer, History of Art, University of York) discussed the enduring importance of the monograph as a publication that enables the author to present primary-source research and expound complex arguments in ways that are impossible to achieve in shorter publications. She however pointed out that there remain few publishers willing to produce a History of Art monograph, and even fewer who will produce a well-designed book with good quality images. Images are the main issue for History of Art publications due to their printing and copyright costs. Nuechterlein then described her experience as author of two books: the first a monograph stemming from her PhD thesis, the second a volume on Holbein and science written as part of a series. Whilst she expressed her appreciation for the design and high-quality images of the publication stemming from her PhD, the high cost of the volume curtailed its circulation. Nuechterlein contrasted this experience with the publication of her second book, which, as part of a series, had to abide by very specific requirements in terms of length and image number and quality, but will be sold at a lower cost and therefore be more widely accessible. Leading on from this point, Nuechterlein spoke about digital resources and accessibility, highlighting the importance of high resolution images available on the internet not only for researchers but also for readers. She illustrated this point by making an example directly related to her most recent work, which entailed a careful analysis of a painting by Holbein. The availability of a high resolution image of the painting on Google, that allows users to zoom in in order to see the most minute details, facilitated her research and was instrumental for the construction of her argument.

The second speaker of the History of Art panel was **Michael White** (Professor of History of Art, University of York), who discussed how publishing within exhibition catalogues may impact the work of art historians. Exhibition catalogues offer academics the opportunity to contribute to a volume in a variety of ways: with a short entry, an essay, or as editors. Catalogues have the remarkable advantage of having a wider international reach than other kinds of publications, their relatively lower price also contributing to increased circulation. However, the format of catalogue publications can affect the quality and depth of an author's contribution. Changes around the planning of exhibitions, which are now a much shorter process than before, may impact the breadth of the research carried out for the publication, and the ever shorter entries, possibly aimed at keeping costs down or at responding to rapidly changing reading habits, may not leave authors enough room to fully expound their arguments and showcase their research. Crucially, the brevity of catalogue entries means that they cannot be submitted to the REF. Nonetheless, in spite of these disadvantages, catalogues can sometimes turn into sophisticated publications, especially if they stem from the outputs of symposia or similar events, as White observed on the basis of his own experience with a private German art gallery. In addition, it may be easier to cover copyright costs by publishing in a catalogue. In this respect, White illustrated the striking example of recent publications on Mondrian, whose paintings present considerable reproduction costs that can only be met with the support of an institution like a museum rather than by an individual author.

The third panelist was **Tim Ayers** (Professor of History of Art, University of York), who spoke of the challenges of long-term research projects and the publications stemming from them. Ayers described his experience as editor of the international project *Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi*, a British Academy research project which is represented both online, through publications and image databases, and in book form. Ayres stressed how fundamental publications arising from long term projects can be, highlighting that they establish scholarly standards and create an indispensable basis for future research. Importantly, Ayers pointed out how, through the compilation of catalogues, inventories and restoration histories, this kind of research yields results that will be as useful in the years to come as they are now. This differentiates long-term project publications from traditional monographs, which may put forward arguments that are likely to be quickly superseded. The invaluable contribution of long-term research projects is however surrounded by considerable challenges. Firstly, it is difficult to fit long-term project publications, the product of 'slow scholarship', within the ever-quickening world of modern publications and the competitive work and REF environments. Secondly, publications arising from long-term projects require generous subsidies from institutions and charities due to their high cost: in addition to the traditional expenses, designing websites and maintaining an online presence for the project are extremely time-consuming and expensive activities. Digital resources present a considerable challenge because, Ayers argued, most of the outcomes of long-term research projects are not suited for internet publication, although he conceded that some material may work well for online access. Moreover, it is still unclear how exactly we should maintain and meet the costs of a constantly updating digital resource for a long-term project.

Art History Discussion

Four key issues emerged during the discussion at the end of this panel: use of images and copyright, impact, preservation, and digital resources. The debate on images was opened by Marilyn Deegan, who asked Jeanne Nuechterlein whether she would be allowed to publish reproductions of the details of a painting found in high resolution on Google. Nuechterlein replied that it could be possible to

have extremely detailed images in a publication, but added that her book would have needed several detailed reproductions, which would have exceeded the limits on image numbers and would have had considerable bearing on the cost of publication. Issues similar to those raised by Nuechterlein were reiterated in other observations made by audience members and panellists. In particular, there was general agreement on the confusion on image copyright, which seems to abide by different rules depending on whether the image is reproduced online or on paper. Michael White pointed out that some of the publishers he dealt with were not educated enough on copyright laws, and others highlighted that most publishers are terrified of being sued, whereas they should be bolder in publishing images.

The second topic of the discussion was impact. An audience member asked what means we have to accurately measure impact, especially in Open Access books, and other participants explained that websites are able to record great amounts of data on their visitors, including age and gender, on the time they spend on the website and on which sections of it in particular, and on the parts of the websites that are shared via social media, as well as recording the number and location of downloads. However, Marilyn Deegan, noting that other ways of evaluating impact, such as citation indices, are easy to manipulate, asked the audience to reconsider what really 'impact' is and whether we can equate impact with value. More precisely, how can we demonstrate if and how people and their research have been changed by an academic book? Mark Jenner engaged with this question, stating that impact by and large has to be ideological. In particular, he raised his concerns about an impact agenda that puts moral responsibility on academics, thus potentially curtailing a critical, unbiased approach, and undermining research.

The third issue was preservation, in particular the responsibility publishers have towards their digital publications. Should publishers or librarians look after digital publications? An audience member observed that publishers have an enduring responsibility towards their online publications, especially since these represent a source of income. Other questions revolved around the preservation of data for a few years or in perpetuity. In relation to this, Emma Brennan (Manchester University Press) made a plea for ephemerality, stating that loss of data is not necessarily disastrous in some cases. It seemed clear to everyone that, although paper books are a better medium in terms of preservation, the outreach of online publications hugely outweighs the dissemination levels a paper book could achieve. This highlighted the tension between preservation and dissemination, engendering the question of how we can successfully marry both in future publications.

The fourth and final aspect of this panel's discussion was the format and fruition of digital resources. Mark Jenner reflected on reading skills and on how technology shapes users, poignantly asking what sort of engagement we want to create by producing, for example, exhibition catalogues and monographs. The theme of engagement highlighted a generational divide. Marilyn Deegan and Jeanne Nuechterlein pointed out how recent conversations with students revealed that young people still tend to prefer paper books, but the students themselves then considered that their younger siblings may well be perfectly at ease consulting purely digital academic resources when they reach University stage. The last point of this exchange on online publications concerned file formats and the specific reading modalities they present. Nuechterlein remarked how different screens, file formats and layouts can change the reading experience, expressing frustration at files that are too fixed. Similarly, Deegan noted how digital formats such as Kindle-style books do not enable readers to appreciate the full length of the volume or to gauge at which stage of it they are.

Archaeology Panel

The second panel of the day, chaired by **Julian Richards** (Professor of Archaeology, University of York), focussed on Archaeology. The chair opened the panel by remarking on the differences and similarities in comparison to History of Art. The most striking incongruity is archaeologists' enthusiastic and wholehearted endorsement of the digital because their discipline is not presented with the same copyright issues for the reproduction of images that afflict instead History of Art. First speaker **Mike Fulford** (Professor of Archaeology, University of Reading) illustrated that publications in Archaeology are divided between field reports on one side, and monographs or articles expounding an author's argument on the other. The double nature of Archaeology publications leads Fulford to believe that online resources for this discipline have a great future, for they could store and showcase numerical and field report data that would require enormous amounts of room if printed on paper, not to speak of the costs. Digital publications could thus work in synchrony with printed books, which in Fulford's view still hold an important place. The scholar then described his wide involvement with digital publications, particularly as head of a project begun in 2012 and conceived to be available online. A useful and gratifying aspect of the project's internet presence was the ability to record usage, which demonstrated a steady interest on the part of the public. Fulford then raised an important point on the gathering and preservation of data in his discipline, which may face the loss of great amounts of information held in the archives of both individual archaeologists and private organisations carrying out excavations.

The second speaker of the Archaeology panel was **Judith Winters** (Editor, *Internet Archaeology*), who illustrated her work as an editor publishing archaeological material online. She explained that *Internet Archaeology* has no restrictions on publications, and accept texts of varying lengths and nature, from monographs to excavation reports, from thematic issues to virtual worlds and animations. The lack of restrictions on word count facilitates a multivocal approach to the publication, and the digital format enhances the readability of particularly long texts, that users may browse by following a link to a specific section. Winters remarked that publications are becoming more visual, and that publishers need to work to meet evolving reader expectations. She also emphasised the importance of the relationship between authors and digital editors, who help develop coherent themes and a specific style of editing to maintain the narrative's standard, and are available to give advice on experimental publication formats. In respect to the editor's relationship with the author, she noted that Open Access had a positive impact on the author's involvement in the publishing process, and that after releasing their publications on Open Access, *Internet Archaeology* authors saw a 35% rise in citations in Google Scholar. A successful format published by *Internet Archaeology* integrates archival material and the presentation of arguments by interspersing the text with links leading to numbers and primary resources. Winters concluded by underlining that authors should think about digital output at the beginning of a project, and that editors need to make sure they possess the resources necessary to manage online publications.

The last speaker of this panel was **Colleen Morgan** (Research Fellow, Centre for Digital Humanities, University of York). Morgan explained how digital archaeology blends together photographs of sites with diagrams of archaeological findings and videos, providing us with a new way to think about how people lived in the past. She also described the concept of "post-digital" media as a critically revised continuation of digital media, pointing out that digital archaeology moves so fast that if she were to write a book about it, it would be outdated by the time it was published. Precisely for this reason, Morgan prefers using the web in ways less formal than a publication, for example through her blog,

which she regularly updates and that gives her research great visibility. Digital archaeology represents an exciting platform for the work of archaeologists, not only through publications or blogs, but also through digital augmentation of archaeological sites, and even in more unexpected ways, such as Twitch, a website where people watch others play a video game and can leave comments. Twitch offered an insightful contribution when archaeologists read the comments and questions written in relation to the game Far Cry Primal, set in the neolithic age. Although Morgan is always keen to find new platforms on which to place her work, she highlighted that digitisation has a tendency to remain partial, and that archives, old publications and especially work produced by marginal authors (e.g. women, black scholars, feminist archaeologists) may disappear. Morgan also added a note on citation networks, which need to be flexible and networked with citation strategies to help us find out who is citing who.

Archaeology Discussion

Similarly to the Art History discussion, four major themes emerged from the discussion at the end of the Archaeology panel: firstly, cost of publications; secondly, the difficulty of peer-reviewing open media such as Facebook; thirdly, the time-consuming nature of maintaining an online presence, often taking time away from in-depth research; and fourthly, a concern with visibility and the limits of the REF cycle. In reply to a question asked by Marilyn Deegan, Judith Winters stated that *Internet Archaeology* is funded through advertising and research funding, stressing that archaeology is a field where authors are keen on Open Access publications. In relation to this, Tim Ayers asked how willing publishers are to produce traditional books in archaeology, and Mike Fulford explained that restrictions on illustrations are an important factor for paper publications in the field. He specified that Historic England have made publication of colour images possible, whereas the Leverhulme Foundation has not. These organisations play a key role in the publication of archaeology. Participants also wondered whether there is a case for publishing work twice, both on paper and digitally, since short books are still important for the general public.

The second issue of the discussion was the quality-assessment of material on open media such as Twitter or Facebook. Although these media engender more dynamic knowledge clusters, they are difficult to peer-review due to the continuous sharing of knowledge that their open format allows. In particular, how can we peer-review videos?

The third topic of discussion explored the tension between time constraints and the need to maintain a regularly updated online presence. Mike Fulford remarked that enhancing the visibility of academic work online via Facebook posts, tweets et cetera is extremely time-consuming. It is all time taken away from in-depth research and from more exhaustive and informative pieces of writing. This is in addition to the other numerous duties of academic authors, who must teach, research and carry out administrative roles. Regarding this issue, Emma Brennan noted that authors are now taking longer than they used to to write and redraft after peer review, and that there is a great amount of pressure on editors to predict when things will be published. Jeanne Nuechterlein also remarked that sometimes speed simply means carrying out a task below the standard required. With regards to standard, Colleen Morgan commented upon the poor quality of most self-published works, and asked what a publisher is exactly, whether they have academic authority and who defines that.

Finally, the discussion concentrated on the REF and the constant worry of increasing one's visibility. Colleen Morgan remarked that edited volumes are useless in forwarding the career of especially younger scholars, for single chapters do not appear on search engines and individual contributions are therefore invisible. Tim Ayers asked how REF shapes things for good or ill, and Mike Fulford replied that, in the case of archaeology, adding the publication of major field projects to the REF is a particularly tricky process. Importantly, Julian Richards commented on the danger of narrowly missing an REF cycle and therefore being declared inactive research-wise.

Library, Publisher and Policy Perspectives

The third panel of the day, chaired by Marilyn Deegan, was devoted to gaining the point of view of librarians and publishers. The first speaker was **Julie Allinson** (Technology Development Manager, Library, University of York), who manages the collection of digital publications on IT platforms and their delivery to users. Allinson discussed the policy-driven nature of Open Access, which is based on the assumption that publicly funded research should be publicly available. However, hard copies still need to be paid for, and therefore a tension ensues between paper and Open Access publications. A way to support the Open Access agenda would be to transform libraries into publishers. This may reduce issues related to the varying platforms and formats of e-publications, formats and platforms on which libraries at the moment have no control. In particular, Allinson noted that the delivery of the greatest majority of e-books falls below standards. The Library at York already engages in web-friendly projects, such as the digitisation of archives and the publication of high-resolution images on the History of Art Portal, created in collaboration with the Department of History of Art. In spite of these collaborations and efforts, libraries are constantly grappling with the difficulties of delivering content to users in the best way possible.

The second speaker for this panel was **Emma Brennan** (Editor, Manchester University Press), who is specialised in art history and history publications. Brennan explained that Manchester University Press is a self-funding, no-profit organisation. This means that editors have to meet expectations of constant growth with a very limited budget, which they have to source through numerous funding applications. She also illustrated that revenue expectations have not changed in spite of the striking decrease in the number of monograph copies printed today in comparison to ten years ago: whereas before MUP printed about 450 copies of a monograph, now they barely print 200. Another issue is the length of an average monograph, which they would like to see reduced at MUP and which is longer in the Humanities than in other disciplines. Brennan emphasised that academic books have a high cost, and therefore have restricted access. Although this issue has been partially tackled by Open Access publications, which have enabled huge amounts of downloads, the funding for Open Access in the Humanities remains rather limited. This is particularly frustrating, for, as Brennan argued, Open Access could an effective advertising platform for Art History publications, and could offer the possibility of licensing agreements to allow free viewing of images. Nonetheless, Brennan admitted that we are still learning the mechanics of OA books, and pointed out that efforts are being made to understand and evaluate scholarly outputs beyond the traditional narrative forms, for example the guidelines the American Historical Association developed to peer-review (non-book) digital outputs. Brennan then reiterated Colleen Morgan's point on edited volumes, which are usually treated as monographs and thus make individual chapters and their authors invisible. The solution to this problem is the addition of metadata to each chapter of an edited volume, fully bringing to the fore the breadth of coverage and the depth of knowledge this kind of publication frequently offers. The talk

ended on the role of UK university presses, and the constant pressure they are under to produce volumes that are appealing to an ever wider audience. Brennan argued that universities should fund their publications because a high percentage of Humanities academics don't have Research Council funding and lack access to OA publication.

The last speaker for this panel was **Martin Postle** (Deputy Director, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art), who briefly illustrated the history of the Paul Mellon Centre and its objectives. The Centre is a registered charity and funding body to promote the study of British art through the funding of research and the publication of monographs and catalogues. It is one of few funding bodies still supporting long-term projects, often producing catalogues raisonnés, the culmination of a life's work. Generally, the books published by the Centre do very well commercially, mainly because they have high quality production value and identify a niche market. This leads Postle to believe that the book has a future, although admittedly its shelf life is limited and as a commercial venture it often represents a loss. Recently, the Centre has become more active in fostering research through seminars and various other events, and has launched a successful online portal with ten-thousand readers. Postle concluded his talk by posing two questions about traditional academic books: what kind of academic books do we want to produce? Who are our readers? He proposed that these are the key questions we need to ask to guarantee the future of the book.

Library, Publisher and Policy Perspectives Discussion

The discussion opened with questions about the numerous existing formats of digital publications. Julie Allinson suggested that perhaps it should be up to libraries to develop their own format of publication with the aim to create standards of user experience and to preserve the material. Marilyn Deegan asked what decisions libraries make when they source, catalogue and disseminate books, and wondered whether libraries should push information out to readers or instead pull them in and enable them to source their own material. In relation to this, Allinson proposed that libraries do away with their catalogues and let Google and Google Scholar fulfil the catalogue's roles, but was unsure as to whether libraries have enough resources to do this. Julian Richards noted that we should strain to achieve the right balance between sustainability and common user experience in order to meet the requirements of the author, adding that information should be pushed out to the readers.

The striking engagement figures of Open Access led participants to wonder whether publications that do well in OA also do well in hard copy. In connection with this, Emma Brennan remarked that OA books are easy to source, but are difficult to read due to their format. She explained that the unfriendly format is often meant to put off readers, so they will buy the hardcopy. Brennan was then asked how many copies of books are sold to libraries and how many to individuals, but she replied that Manchester University Press does not record that type of information because it is difficult track.

Colleen Morgan asked whether the panellists knew of any instances of particularly successful digital publications, and Julie Allinson cited the example of digital images, which allow an in-depth analysis that would not be possible in a hard copy. She also added that considerable developments are underway in relation to audio and video material. Martin Postle pointed out that success can only be evaluated if we define more clearly what we are looking for in a digital publication, and Marilyn Deegan mentioned the example of the Rothschild Foundation, whose funders are creating standards for online resources. With regards to standards, Julie Allinson stated that they are important also for

the preservation of digital archival material. Responding to a point on ephemerality made by Marilyn Deegan, Allinson explained that simply because we can preserve great amounts of materials, it does not mean we should. Rather, we should continue applying archival standards to the digital material we decide to preserve.

The next topic was costs, highlighting differences between the UK and the USA. Emma Brennan mentioned the Ithaca Report on the staggering cost of making monographs, remarking that University Presses should serve the academic public, and should be less obsessed with business models. She also added that there still is an appetite to fund little pockets of publishing in the UK. Julian Richards noted that it is particularly difficult to publish non-funded research, and that there is not a proper funding mechanism within universities to aid with publications. Marilyn Deegan pointed out that authors have to source the money to cover costs of publication, and wondered what will happen in terms of costs when OA is mandated.

The discussion ended on the relationship between libraries and publishers. Emma Brennan and Julie Allinson were asked whether University presses work in collaboration with libraries, or whether there is tension between them. Allinson explained that at York the library works in partnership with White Rose Publishing. Similarly, Brennan described how librarians at the University of Manchester are involved with MUP, and how library and press jointly develop projects.

Final Discussion

Marilyn Deegan opened the final discussion by summing up the themes and ideas of the day and explaining that the Academic Book of the Future Project is not intended to drive a policy agenda on behalf of the government. Rather, it means to represent the academic community to policy makers. A key aim is to do away with unfunded assumptions about OA publishing. Deegan is particularly interested in widening academic participation and open research to the south of the world.

The discussion revolved mainly around the dissemination of academic work and the REF, and their impact on research. The perceived importance of the REF often hides the fact that it provides a distorted reflection of research, since it suits some academics more than other. Oxymoronically, the REF has brought about the death of popular academia. Although it was designed to encourage and assess the wider impact of academia, the REF's policy makes textbooks and popular academia a waste. Another flaw of the REF lies in edited books, which do not count within its cycle. And yet, editing a volume is a demanding intellectual effort, often producing work that shapes a field. Importantly, edited volumes can be very experimental, but the REF's neglect means that any crucial contributions to scholarship may be lost and turn into marginalia. Another source of frustration is the evaluation of academic work by academics themselves, whilst the standards are devised by HEFCE and other bodies. Other discrepancies lie in differences between senior and early-career researchers and between subjects. Employers in art history want candidates to have published a book, whereas in archaeology multi-authored publications are more sought-after.

A major issue discussed was the commodification of academic work. The REF cycle, the constant battles for funding and requests to outline tangible outputs of research are turning academics into producers. This process is losing sight of the fact that academics are part of a conversation, and that it is extremely difficult to assess what research will be influential in the future. A participant made a plea

for elitism, asserting that not all information can successfully be disseminated to a wider audience, and that the democratisation of research often means that critical filters are lost. Works that are created for large numbers of people often fail to address the more specific needs of the academic community. On the other hand, writing for the wider public can be daunting due to changing expectations: the public tends to want answers, but academia rarely offers conclusive solutions because its nature is to be resistant to closure. Multilayered publications, attempting to address various types of readers at the same time, may be a solution to this problem, but they are incredibly difficult to realise and extremely time-consuming. Marilyn Deegan suggested that perhaps it should be up to people outside of academia to make research more widely available, for example through fiction.

Jeanne Nuechterlein pointed out that academics need to have multiple ways of disseminating their research, and wondered where the UK sits within the international field in terms of publications, especially in relation to OA and in comparison to the US. Emma Brennan replied that the US are heavily invested in OA, and mentioned Luminos, an experimental project on OA of the University of California.

Julian Richards observed that academic writing can be particularly rewarding when it is aimed at a wider public, especially because the effort made to meet the demands and expectations of the public often drives top-end research. There are also instances of academic books that have become best-sellers: Marilyn Deegan mentioned Michael Putt's and Christine Gross-Loh's "The Path," an academic book on Chinese philosophy that has become a best seller in America. Emma Brennan observed that there exists a difference in standards between the UK and the US, nonetheless adding that the ability to summarise research and explain its importance as plainly as possible is the only way to get published. Jeanne Nuechterlein commented on the perception that everything academics do needs to have an audience, observing that this eliminates a huge portion of academic work.

Marilyn Deegan then pointed out that the clarity of writing is crucial for the durability of academic work, although not everyone has the skill to write clearly. In response to that, Nuechterlein remarked that there is a difference between clarity and pitch. One always aims for clarity, whichever audience one may be addressing, but it is the audience that determines terminology and the detail of the argument.

The last issues discussed were the concept of reuse and the pressure that the increased availability of resources puts on academics. In relation to reuse, Marilyn Deegan stated that online publications can be quarried in different ways (data mining, atomisation of books and knowledge). However, quarrying can manipulate and distort a publication, especially as far as the integrity of monographs is concerned. She also wondered whether literature can be considered as data, and whether it can or even should be quarried, expressing her discomfort with atomisation. In reply to that, Julian Richards stated that reuse is fundamental in archaeology, because excavations are only carried out once, and therefore future research forcibly relies on data mining. He noted that academics have to accept that their work will be reused in various ways, especially if it is online. Deegan then defended her original point, reiterating that in the case of monographs data-mining may lead to skewed interpretations of the arguments the book presents, that can only be fully understood if the monograph is examined in its entirety.

Finally, Deegan remarked that increased accessibility of resources thanks to the internet is not only an empowering tool, but also a source of anxiety: online access, available whenever and wherever, means that scholars are expected to read ever more. This generates huge amounts of pressure that may impact negatively the scholar's work.