Academic & Non-Fiction Authors' Association of South Africa

ANFASA

Dedicated to empowering authors

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Photo Artwork by Damien Tomaselli

Authors are the life blood of publishing

Keyan Tomaselli

The Magazine has found a niche in addressing publishing, writing, authorship, copyright and IP, and academic issues that affect SA universities. The DHET incentive system, for example, has resulted in many anomalies and contradictions, some of which are legally fuzzy.

In this issue the emphasis is on authors. When I was a professional film maker during the 1970s, my acquaintances rarely took me seriously, as creative activities were seen to be a hobby, fun, a spare-time activity. Authorship, similarly, is part of the national creative industries value chain. As Jeremy Weightman, director of the HSRC Press observes, "Many authors do writing full-time. Thousands of people earn their entire income from the value and supply chains in content creation and publishing, and work full time in the field. Generally, publishers have very low margins and earn far less than authors, with incomes needing to be directed to ongoing investment in new content, new books, etc." The value of creative sectors is now recognised by the Creative Industries initiative being managed from the Department of Trade and Industry.

ANFASA's mandate is authors' rights and development. As Weightman warns, when author's rights are disrespected this results in a content creation vacuum plus new forms of content colonisation and the "inability to compete/trade/operate internationally on an even footing." Tellingly, concludes Weightman, "the myths swirling around book prices, author's rights and copyright mimics 'the Trump phenomenon'. He concludes that we need to understand why this thing has become so magnetic, as false and reckless as it is, and why even rational people are being misled by it."

> ***"we need to understand why this thing has become so magnetic, as false and reckless as it is, and why even rational people are being misled by it"***

In response to this, this number addresses the precarity of authors, offers reports on publishing conferences, and a letter about students who fail to leverage what university resources are available to them, but who nevertheless complain about fees and prices.

Scholarly Writers, the Precariat and Copyright

Monica Seeber and Keyan G Tomaselli

The author of a book aimed at an academic readership (whether a textbook for undergraduate studies, a scholarly monograph or a chapter in a compilation) might expect two royalty sources. The primary income stream is a percentage of income generated by sales. The secondary income stream is a small royalty of extracts based on the licensing by the Dramatic, Artistic and Literary Rights Organisation (DALRO). With a very small market (by international standards), sales of scholarly books in South Africa are modest. However, the secondary income stream, though also modest, often outlasts the first, and authors rely on it.

What an author earns from writing and publishing a book varies enormously according to its genre. And, we all know that you are not going to make a million unless you are JK Rowling or Wilbur Smith. It is a truism that academic authors are not in it for the money – but that does not mean that their writing should be wilfully undervalued. ANFASA advocates for the rights of authors to receive payment for their talent, knowledge and labour.

chart credit: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/11/precariat-global-class-rise-of-populism/

> ***"A new class system:** the hierarchy of impoverishment*
> *At the top are a plutocracy and an elite, earning rentier incomes and wielding enormous political power. Way below them, in income terms, is a salariat, a shrinking group with employment security and an extensive array of non-wage enterprise benefits such as pensions, paid holidays and medical leave. Alongside them in income terms is a growing group of proficians, not seeking employment security but frenetically making money, endangered by burn out.*
> *Next comes the old core of the working class, the proletariat, for whom the unions worked and for whom welfare states were built. The norm was stable full-time labour, with entitlements tied to performance of labour. Shrinking everywhere, there is no reason to wish to revive a society in which this way of living is the norm.*
> *Below it in income terms, the precariat is growing. It is not an under-class; global capitalism wants a workforce with its core characteristics. It can be defined in three dimensions. First, it has distinctive relations of production. Commentators have emphasized the first aspect, some claiming that the precariat is not a new class because there has always been unstable labour. But while it is true that the precariat is being pressured to accept unstable labour, this is the least interesting feature."*

We challenge the contention that academic authors don't need to be paid for their writing because they all have day jobs, and because those employed by public universities earn generous publishing incentives from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) for their employers, some of which top slice a percentage for the author's own research code. And, a few universities, against the spirit of the DHET publication incentive legislation, permit authors to appropriate a percentage of the incentive as taxable take-home pay. The question is, then: are all academic authors adequately remunerated by their employers?

The Precariat – hand-to-mouth living

Only those who are appointed against establishment posts are fully remunerated with benefits, and some are better paid than others. Adjuncts associated with universities are not well remunerated, or remunerated at all, and need their royalties (small as they may be) to pay their daily bills.

Adjuncts are part of the precariat, a social class whose

members suffer from a condition of existence without predictability or security, seriously affecting their material and psychological welfare. Members of the precariat are unlikely ever to secure full-time jobs. They lack institutional benefits like pension, paid annual leave, or research leave, and medical aid. They cannot anticipate job security or full and consistent employment, and must pay for their pensions and medical care from erratic and precarious opportunities. Following the 2008 financial meltdown, and the cyclical commodity cycles and the technological changes deriving from the 4th industrial Revolution, the precariat is a class-constantly-in-the-making. Covid-19 will have considerably exacerbated the threats faced by the precariat.

Within the knowledge sector, an obvious example of the precariat is the increasing incidence of part-time, and non-tenured postgraduate staff. Though they might possess the necessary qualifications, they are structurally excluded from the system, eking out precarious livings on the margins of higher education institutions (HEIs). This class contributes the cheap labour, and its members are often treated as intellectual pariahs. PhD graduates have little option but to embrace the much-maligned role of postdoctoral life, living a hamster-wheel, hand-to-mouth existence, offering the same services repeatedly across a range of HEIs with little chance of progression (Glynn 2019: 1-2). This emergent grouping exhibits three dimensions. First, its members are habituated to a life of unstable, casual, temporary and insecure labour. They lack an occupational identity or organisational narrative to give to their lives. Second, they are denied non-wage benefits that even the proletariat obtain, such as paid holidays, medical leave and the prospect of a living pension. Third, they feel excluded from communities that would confer identity and solidarity (Standing 2018: 1-2).

At South African universities, this intellectual precariat class comprises, inter alia:

- Full-time fee-paying graduate students who must cover their living expenses, support their families, and who are required to publish as a condition of their registration.
- Senior research associates and honorary appointees who, like part-time lecturers, might rely on publishing royalties and who, depending on the university, might be allocated a small portion of the DHET publication incentive.
- Funded post-doctoral fellows who are expected to earn their institutional keep by publishing in DHET accredited journals. While post doctoral funding is tax free, by the time one is a post doc, being older, one may have family responsibilities and other commitments. Their appointments are rarely renewed beyond two years and the cut off age is 40.
- Unemployed, or self-employed authors, who may not be affiliated to a university, but who are still contributing to national academic research output.
- Retired academics, who are no longer appointed against establishment posts but who still contribute significantly to national research output. They rely on their pensions and grants (if available) to fund such work, aided by the DHET incentive, depending on the policy of the institution to which they are affiliated.
- National Research Foundation (NRF) rated academics, who though retired, are still producing significant research. They are no longer being adequately supported by the NRF. Until 2018, a B-rated scholar, for example, was allocated R80 000 annually by the NRF for research expenses. That was cut, without warning, to R30 000 over a five year period from 2019, that is, R6 000 annually, a cut of R74 000.
- Not all authors at all universities qualify for a portion of for the DHET publishing incentive. Those who do can accumulate significant amounts of tax fee funds to

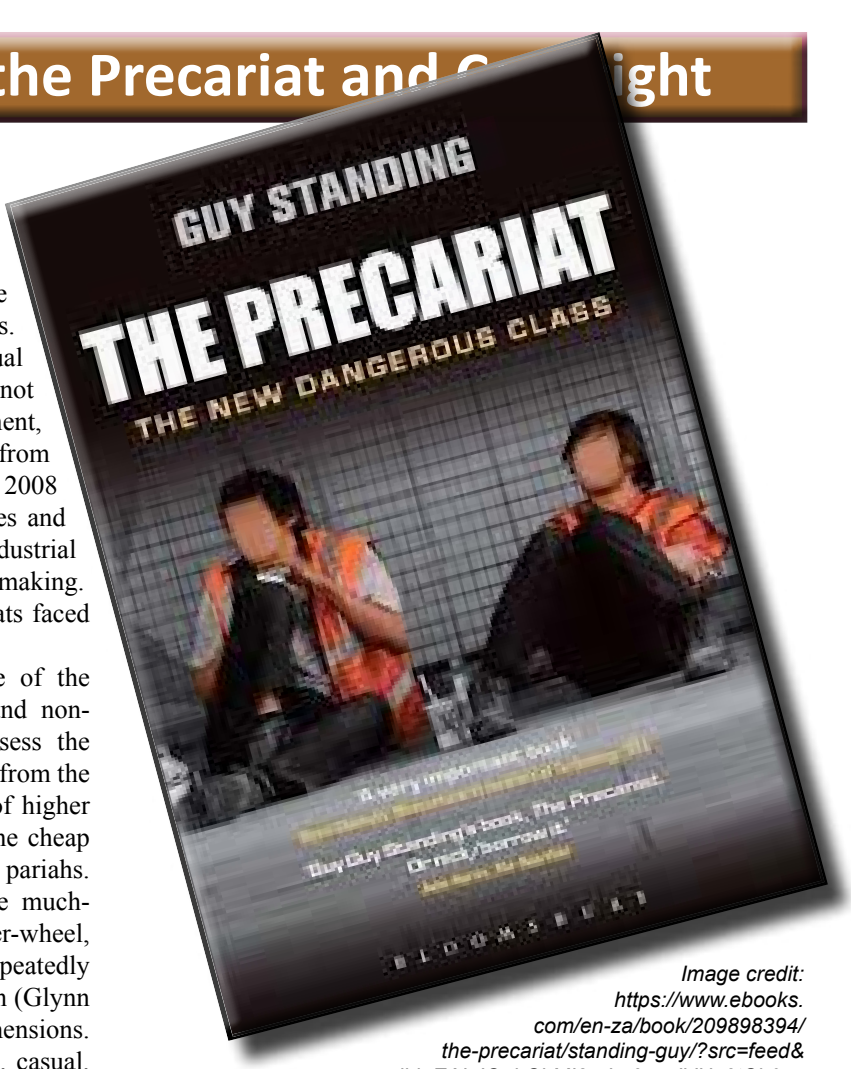

Image credit: https://www.ebooks.com/en-za/book/209898394/the-precariat/standing-guy/?src=feed&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI84rlvr6x7gIVUu3tCh0uaQOVEAYYASABEgJJw_D_BwE

Prof. Guy Standing, author of The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class

fund their research expenses, conference going, article processing charges and lecturing buy-outs. This benefit, a kind of expense account, is not available to everyone. Different universities apply different policies.

- Then, there are those employed in the private educational sector who are typically part of the precariat – short-term, part-time, without benefits, no research leave, who are nevertheless expected to obtain MA degrees, often without adequate institutional support. Their institutions do not qualify for DHET publication incentives and these scholars are not eligible for research grants from state agencies. They are on their own, unlike full-time university appointments.

African Culture and Royalties

Now, we want to caution against the rather condescending belief held by some that black authors are especially eager to relinquish their royalties because African culture is argued to be largely communal and collective in nature. Africans are no different from any others when it comes to understanding the value of just payment for work done.

Here's a true story. When Seeber was setting up ANFASA, hosting a round-table on copyright at the then Rand Afrikaans University, a young man, trendily dressed in distressed blue jeans and T-shirt, wearing what looked like designer sunglasses, and identifying himself as a lecturer at Wits, jumped up. "I don't like this copyright thing," he said. "I don't need to be paid. Everything I write is for the benefit of mankind."

Next day, says Seeber, I was telling this to the late author Phaswane Mpe, a colleague in African Literature at Wits, where we were teaching on the Publishing Studies course. "How very noble," said Mpe, his exact words, "but, as for me, I do want to be paid because I have a wife and child to feed, and I need the money."

Some lecturers who earn well above the national average and who are easily able to make ends meet, similarly do not want to protect their own intellectual property, or that of others, because they claim that their students can't afford it. This obtuse conclusion applies when lecturers believe the hype that textbooks are vastly expensive. They also claim that 70 per cent of publisher profits flow North – despite the fact that most textbook publishers are actually locally owned, and local companies with foreign ownership provide jobs and local reinvestment. The most cogent refutation of the North-bound publisher profits argument, however, is that it is precisely to grow local knowledge production that the writing and publishing of local knowledge has to be encouraged and authors incentivised to do so (Frahm-Arp).

Articles and books are not unaffordable. The DALRO blanket licence makes it affordable for students. The question is whether or not individual universities absorb the cost of the licence – or do they pass it on to the students as 'copyright fees'? Or if, when the cost *is* passed on, whether it equates to or is higher than the per student amount paid by the university for the blanket licence.

Cost of University Education

The cost of a university education includes the cost of the lecturers and administrators, the lecture halls, the library and the entire university infrastructure. One of these elements is learning materials. Why is payment by the university for lecturers, librarians, managers and so on legitimate, whereas the cost of books is dispensable because the students are poor? Why is it the authors' obligation to provide the fruits of their talents and labour to the students, to 'open the doors of learning' for them, whereas lecturers, deans, vice-chancellors, managers, librarians collect their salaries without compunction at the end of every month.

"those famous scientific journals in which scholarly reputations are made don't exactly fall from the sky. They are massively expensive to produce"

Academics complain about the multinational scholarly journal publisher Elsevier. Taylor & Francis is often equated with Elsevier, even though the former is a minnow by comparison and has actually introduced a lower African pricing mechanism for subscriptions and open access fees. It has also significantly invested in 50 South African journals by building capacity at Unisa Press, the National Inquiry Services Centre that publishes 29 journals from Grahamstown, and Medpharm, Centurion, that hosts 12 titles. The same complainants admit to publishing in Taylor & Francis – and even Elsevier journals. Perhaps they should rather boycott them?

We're not defending multinational publishers or the profit motive. But, those famous scientific journals in which scholarly reputations are made don't exactly fall from the sky. They are massively expensive to produce. There are no local journals, yet, able to challenge their hegemony – and there never will be if the Copyright Amendment Bill (CAB) is not amended as it will in its original form discourage academic writing and publishing. This is where Plan S also comes into play, at a largely European level, discussed in the previous edition. (Plan S)

Scholarly Writers, the Precariat and Copyright

Another of ANFASA's objectives is to encourage more knowledge production, especially among young scholars. This is another reason why ANFASA has been fighting for authors' rights not to be eroded by ever more exceptions for education. Full-time academics who are not part of the precariat find that the heavy demands of teaching and administration leave little time for writing during the working day. Research, writing and preparing for publication then becomes primarily an after-hours activity – but the dissident response is that after-hours work doesn't need to be paid because the author has a day job.

Cost of Books

The cost of books and the obligation of those who write and publish them to offer them more cheaply (or gratis) to poor and needy students, has become a dialogue of contestation and acrimony. All the articles on copyright and universities linked to the ANFASA website have been carefully researched and vetted by copyright lawyers, both locally and internationally. But some ill-advised media commentary has relied on misinformation to justify the 'poverty' argument: because a large segment of the population is poor, the doors of learning are closed against them because university learning and reading matter costs more than 40 per cent of what black South African households earn in a year. That appears to be a damning statistic, but let's look at it more closely:

A 2018 study found that 40% of black South African households receive an annual income of R33 000 for a family of five. Contrast this to textbook costs, which were often found to exceed R6 000 a year. This means that an imported textbook could potentially cost as much as a few months' food for a family in the lowest-earning quintiles of the population (Santani 2019).

We could find no textbook that cost R6000. The most expensive we found was for R1 500 in engineering, imported, hard cover, 500 glossy pages, that will last a lifetime. Moreover, course packs made under the DALRO blanket licence enable access to information at very low cost to the individual student. And, again, learning materials are as essential a part of university education as are lecturers, lecture halls, libraries and the entire university infrastructure. Despite this, and DHET's student grants, Parliament initially chose to back the poverty argument by approving that course packs will be free for education. But of course they will not be 'free'. The photocopying machine still has to be taken into account, the ink cartridges, the paper. Canon, Hitachi and HP are not offering their services for free, and neither are the print shops as authors are expected to do.

Enabling Environment

The poverty of students is separate from the arguments around whether or not academics are actually due their royalties since they are all assumed to be fully employed. The issue is that a democratic and benevolent state bears the responsibility, the obligation, for providing the enabling legal environment for creativity and knowledge production to take place. The law cannot reserve financial reward for the unemployed or under-employed. Nor should the law provide (as does the Bill) that because students are poor authors (but not politicians, for example) should necessarily work for less.

Those arguments have no place in a discussion about legislative development. That doesn't mean that these are not critical issues, but we should not be muddling them up with the law. The legal issues are not about poor students, or about overworked academics. They are about a legal framework that complies with international obligations, that is in line with the Constitution and the Bill of Rights and with IP policy. Nor does it imply that the law should ignore the situation on the ground. *Of course* the legislator has to survey and to meet the needs of society, but the final result of debate about those diverse needs should be balanced legislation that takes both sides into account.

Academics in South Africa are subject to a number of regulatory regimes, some of which confer rewards. Amongst these are the DHET publication incentive that itself distinguishes bona fide academic publishers from those that are not. DHET wants academic authors to publish with the very legacy presses that the CAB wants to destroy. Our argument is that authors cannot be singled out alone to personally cover shortfalls in state educational funding. That's an institutional responsibility.

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A Word to the Wise:

Tips for Publishing in International Journals

Duduzile Zwane

"How the mighty are fallen". That phrase came to mind after I received an e-mail that rejected yet another of my research articles.

As a new PhD graduate, I had underestimated the process of publishing, particularly in an international journal. The intoxicating feeling of obtaining a doctorate had duped me into believing that it would be child's play. If one's 80 000 word thesis could impress a panel of professors with superior expertise, surely one's 6000 word article could do the same? How narcissistic and naïve I was. After 15 months of harrowing rejections, many shed tears and sessions with my exhausted therapist, I finally published in a high impact, international journal. Below I recount my experience. Hopefully, the younger academics can derive valuable lessons from my tale of woe and bypass my pitfalls.

As aforesaid, I grossly overestimated myself. As a lover of language and words, I was convinced that a few ornate anecdotes about my research findings could enthrall any journal editor. Therefore, I was aghast at the lengthy critique that my first article garnered. I had selected an international journal that was favoured by a professor whose work I admired. Based on the quality of their feedback, all three reviewers had read my article painstakingly. Therefore, I knew that there was no foul play. Consequently, I decided to incorporate their suggestions into a new article.

Surprisingly, it got rejected again. The feedback was constructive, yet I remained bewildered by the rebuff. My third, fourth, fifth and sixth article submission attempts were also rejected. I then decided to attend a publishing workshop that was facilitated by a distinguished professor. Two days later, I applied his power-point presentation to the abandoned drafts of various articles. Lo and behold, this seventh submission was accepted with minor revisions. Three months later, it was finally published. This mortifying affair taught me the following:

Firstly, one needs to familiarise oneself with the core objectives of their intended journal. Figure out what they are trying to convey through the articles that they publish. In this way, you can ensure that your writing voice is congruent with their target audience. Some journals permit moderate artistic flair from authors. Others, are partial to a crisp and concise tone. Therefore, conform to their house-style. Also, try to adhere to the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR) guidelines.

Secondly, never be disheartened by the reviewers' evaluation of your article. Bear in mind that the review process is anonymous. Therefore, their criticism is not a personal attack on you, nor is it a metric that measures your intellectual ability. They are merely appraising a single submission, which can usually be improved by integrating their observations. On the rare occasion when the commentary feels harsh, ignore it, remembering every field has its eccentrics.

Lastly, ask for help. Most scholars self-isolate and flounder by themselves. However, wise counsel from experienced colleagues can cushion the blow of the most scathing article review.

The Chairman's Corner

Facing challenges and forging ahead

By Professor Sihawukele Ngubane, ANFASA Chairman

Dear ANFASA authors and friends, A warm welcome to all of you in the new year. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a human, health, and economic crisis that has deeply affected our lives and for many people around the globe, including our association. My heartfelt condolences go out to all those who have lost loved ones during this difficult time and a special condolence to the family of our very own Rev Sonti who also passed away due to COVID19.

The new year is proving to be worse than the previous, but it is exciting to let you know that ANFASA is on the move, as you can see that our magazine is launching its first issue for 2021. Despite the circumstances and challenges affecting the world we are ready to see our authors becoming more productive than before. As we are learning more about this virus and covid one fact remains that people are dying. During this difficult time, it is important to continue looking after our physical and mental health. By observing lockdown protocols, we will survive and by keeping a safe distance we will find space to read and write more books.

The ANFASA magazine is a platform for academic and non-fiction authors to express their views and share their creative pursuit based on their originality of thought and perceptions. We welcome any content that contribute to the upliftment of society, country and the continent. We are happy to announce that 15 authors were selected for the award of ANFASA's grant scheme 2020 and I wish to congratulate them and wish them successful writing. This annual award is made possible through the help of Royal Norwegian Embassy as well as SAMRO Foundation who supports two music projects each year, we are grateful to their continued partnership. We encourage more potential authors to apply again this year once the call is out who knows you might be lucky to become one of the recipients in 2021.

This year we look forward to achieving our key priorities including AGMs that did not take place last year and this year we will host both on the date to be announced shortly. We will also be hosting the Power of Authors International Symposium in the later part of the first term. We continue to empower authors through scheduled workshops and also strive to protect their rights where and when we can. On behalf of the leadership in ANFASA I wish to thank you for keeping your membership up to date all the time. Thank you to colleagues in the office for keeping our organization alive and strong. I extend my warm wishes to all authors to continue this journey on the road of excellence.

"**If you don't like someone's story, write your own**" (Chinua Achebe)

Do we need our own university presses?

Veronica Klipp, Publisher, Wits University Press

The value of local university presses – generally small and few in number – was discussed at the South African Book Fair in early September. This was at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, which was marked by a sense of isolation and anxiety about the future. But this period also offered opportunities for introspection, and for university presses it was a time to reflect on their value and purpose, and to invite debate on why it is so important for the local academy to have its own university presses.

Old press, Ulster Folk Museum, Northern Ireland *Photo: Mike Maxwell*

Thinking the world from here

In the early 2000s, university presses in South Africa were given a boost when two developments overlapped: The State, through the Department of Higher Education, Science and Technology (DHET), encouraged and rewarded universities' research outputs in the form of publication subsidies; at the same time, a boom in the demand for local books benefitted small and independent publishers. There was now a bigger market for so-called scholarly or cross-over books, which were being read not only by academics and students in libraries, but were in demand from a wider readership in the young democracy.

The South African experience of a dual readership of scholarly books mirrors the multi-faceted role played by university presses elsewhere in the world. A value statement from the international Association of University Presses formulates this as follows:

> University Presses are at the center of the global knowledge ecosystem. Our work also reaches out to a broad audience of readers, and ultimately to the larger world that depends on informed and engaged peer-reviewed scholarship published to the highest standards.[1]

While the largest portion of their readership remains local, South African university presses clearly see themselves as players in the global knowledge ecosystem. Their publishing activities are a crucial factor in bringing the voices from here, and from the Global South more broadly, into debate with knowledge practitioners in the dominant Global North. As Divine Fuh (Director of the Institute for Humanities Africa (HUMA) at the University of Cape Town) reminded the panel, while African research output amounts to less than 1% of the total global output, it is showing huge growth in scientific production (38.6% between 2012 and 2016). In the same period, the number of academic authors in Africa increased by a massive 43%.[2]

The economic question is political

Why then has the question of sustainability become such a focus of debate in the academy? The politics of funding priorities in Higher Education (HE) institutions was brought into sharp focus by the 2015 FeesMustFall movement. The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to exacerbate this further, as conditions of austerity become more pronounced. Along with an increased marketization of the HE sector, the question of whether local university presses should be subsidised – and yes, to be clear, they cannot function without funding, even in the well-resourced Global North[3] – is often seen in purely economic terms. But the panel agreed that this debate needed to be formulated more strategically.

Research conducted in 2015 showed that only eight of the 52 listed university presses on the African continent actively published in that year; five of these were South African presses.[4] What happened to the others? Many African countries with universities and presses were subjected to Structural Adjustment Programmes, of which cultural industries were some of its first casualties. Yet, as Divine Fuh explained, the knowledge industry is a crucial weapon in the struggle 'to dominate the virus of colonialism', which continues to marginalise and dominate research in the Global South.

Crain Soudien (CEO of the Human Sciences Research Council) described the decolonisation function of local presses as the responsibility to tell 'stories of "otherness"'. It means, for example, not (only) using textbooks or monographs that are internationally written and published. Maria Frahm-Arp (Executive Director of the Library and Information Centre at University of Johannesburg) pointed out that ebook usage at UJ libraries increased

1 https://aupresses.org/the-value-of-university-presses/

2 See, for example: https://www.elsevier.com/connect/africa-generates-less-than-1-of-the-worlds-research-data-analytics-can-change-that

3 According to confidential members' data, 81% of presses belonging to the Association of University Presses relied on support from their parent institutions in 2018.

4 Van Schalkwyk, Francois and Luescher, Thierry. 2017. The African University Press, pp. 15-16. Cape Town: African Minds.

by 73% during the lockdown. In addition, students were increasingly reading books outside their narrow disciplines. These books need to be written accessibly but from an up-to-date Southern perspective.

It is interesting to think back to the 1990s, according to Sarah Mosoetsa (CEO of the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences), when publishing in journals was encouraged at the expense of monographs and books. This culture was aligned with 'a negation of the Humanities and Social Sciences', which require the kind of sustained argument that is the basis of publication in monographs. While subsidy from journal publishing far outweighs that of book publishing, quality research outputs in the HSS clearly contribute to the high standing and reputation of research universities in South Africa.

Custodians of our voices

Mosoetsa questioned the concept of 'international recognition' that seems to be bandied about thoughtlessly as a marker of quality in academic publishing. What is considered international? Why is Council for the Development of Social Science in Africa (CODESRIA), for example, not considered international; or the presses at Wits, UKZN and HSRC? Against a prevailing culture of extraversion, whereby colonised countries continue to look to the North for their reference points, we have our own stories to tell and should 'work effortlessly every day so we can unearth new voices, new stories.'

Ultimately it comes down to the books themselves. While there is a lot of debate about the poor reading culture in South Africa, Soudien said that we cannot let go of complexity, especially when it comes to research and writing about Africa: 'Research needs to be placed in the public domain in a way that respects people. Science is my inheritance as a human subject.' Any writer who disrespects and condescends to her reader has not understood the importance of honing the craft of writing.

It is clear that we need a political programme to promote local writing and publishing that frames these debates in our own terms. This may be risky – but university presses are nothing if not risk-takers in the absence of purely commercial criteria that many other publishers are forced to adhere to.

If quality (as defined by peer review) is the main decider of who will be published and not, for example, name recognition, it stands to reason that new voices will come to the fore, voices that will tell our own stories and take the dream of decolonisation to a global readership.

In their closing comments, the panelists called for support of local books and publishing:

Read African books! Read African publishers! (Divine)

Push back against commercialisation! (Maria)

Mediate, in the competitive symbolic space, the life of thinking! (Crain)

Let's make books fashionable! (Sarah)

What a wonderful end to a fascinating discussion. We definitely need more opportunities for this kind of broad-based engagement.

South Africa's Publishing Prospects

Duduzile Zwane

Every academic is familiar with the phrase: publish or perish. This continual dissemination of knowledge is the lifeblood of academia. Failure leads to career stagnation. Fortunately for South African scholars, the local publishing industry is committed to streamlining publication processes. This was evident during the Scholarly Publishing Conference, which was jointly spearheaded by Wits University Press and Sabinet. This online event occurred on October 28 2020 and featured an array of publishing mavens. Their presentations provided insight into not only the current state of the publishing industry, but its promising future. The panelists drew the audience's attention to themes such as:

- *The importance of persistent identifiers (PIDs) in open research:* PID's are beneficial to researchers and readers alike. The identifier makes a researcher's work readily recognisable and accessible. Names can be messy due to mutable factors such as spelling and punctuation variations. This can make an author's publications downright vexing to find. PID's eliminate these challenges for the latter group. They direct them to the desired researcher's output quickly and painlessly.
- *The advantages of alternative metrics:* This refers to the diverse platforms through which an author's work has been proliferated. The broader these avenues are, the more impactful the research output becomes. In the past, academic researchers were restricted to a handful of traditional domains to share their work. These included discipline specific journals that were read solely by their colleagues. Presently, alternative arenas are being availed to them. These are open to an extensive and multifaceted audience. Examples include social media networks and private sector platforms. These digital spaces ensure that an author can evaluate the effect of their research content exponentially faster. Whereas before this could only be reliably assessed after two to five years, these newer metrics reveal it within days. Additionally, the likelihood of a researcher's work being integrated into policy documents is now greater.
- Connectivity: Publishing entities are actively working towards bridging the gap between specialists from the same academic disciplines. If the publishing infrastructure is efficient, interactivity between authors with similar interests will be enhanced. Further, geographic location will no longer constrain their ability to retrieve their peer's various works. Ultimately, the goal is to establish a type of digital information hub where everyone is familiar with each other.
- *Copyright in Scholarly Writing:* knowledge production is time consuming and labour intensive. Therefore, all authors should be adequately compensated for their efforts. They should also have ownership of their work.
- *Openness and Transparency:* we seldom differentiate between these two catchphrases. Openess conveys the importance of illuminating publishing *procedures* for researchers. Conversely, the latter emphasises the cultivation of *trust* between publishing personnel and researchers. As a result, the publishing industry is escalating its efforts towards transparency because it fosters a symbiotic relationship between publishers and authors. Both parties feel validated for their contributions.

The publishing sector is in a state of continuous evolution. So too are the strategies that it implements to support researchers. Many more conversations must occur in order to refine practices and policies. However, researchers should be encouraged by the fact that the dream of an immaculately functioning publishing industry, may be realised sooner than later.

Book reviewing is a measurable output

Ike's Bookshop: Books, like films, are inactive until viewed and read

Keyan G Tomaselli

Reviewing is becoming a lost art amongst South African academics. Even globally, many academic journals have terminated their book review section due to the difficulty of extracting reviews from initially willing but always tardy reviewers. Yet, journals like the American-based African Studies Review, subjects its book reviewers to very exacting stndards. Its editors take book reviewing very seriously as an academic activity. So, too, does ANFASA, whose website now carries a book review section. The Association reproduces (in longer form) Chris Merrett's reviews first published in The Witness (Pietermartizburg), also hosted on his own page, "From the Thornveld", which are regularly added to (add hyperlinks to the two sets of pages). Second, the ANFASA site provides a full listing of book reviews taken from the journal I edit, *Critical Arts*, one of the few academic journals to continue with a book review section. In the latter case, reviews can be accessed via subscribing university libraries, or directly from their authors.

The relationship between authors, reviewers and readers completes the chain.

Books, like films, are inactive until viewed and read. They have social impact. While many newspapers still allocate book review sections, these are being lost from many academic journals. The reasons are because of the cost of space, the cost in time of managing the book review process, which usually requires a dedicated editor with the patience of Job. Added, is the cost of the book and of couriering a copy to a reviewer, though e-copies are helpful, if risking leakage, and often, frustratingly, the reviewer fails to write the review.

And, of course, in South Africa, where the sharper edge applies to everything, academics are actively *discouraged* by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) reward system, instrumentally reproduced internally within universities. Curiously, for our universities, reading and reviewing translates to 'wasting' time, as current professional practice is aimed at the garnering of measurable productivity units that can be ticked off in a template signed off by a 'line manager' whose own ultimate arbiter is the human resources division. Only 'full' research outputs count: reviews, research letters, editorials and commentaries are often considered distractions.

For me, writing book reviews is a stepping stone to:

- encouraging an intense reading of a book; and
- re-using that review in a longer article on the same topic.
- Book reviews are the basic stepping stone also to writing a thesis, especially for the literature survey.

Reviewing is crucial academic activity; reviews can challenge authors to rethink their work, to revise a forthcoming edition, and to progress knowledge. And, of course, reviews assist in publicising the book. Authors appreciate book reviews, even from those that are critical of their work as someone made the effort to read and write about it. Everyone benefits. For example, a devastatingly critical review of my second book, published in 1979, shifted me onto a very different analytical path that underpins my conceptual frameworks to date.

Often, as a book review editor for a visual anthropology journal, I write the review myself. The benefits: i) I get a free copy of the book, ii) I get to read the book intensively, which I might not otherwise have done; and iii) very often, the author contacts me and establishes a long-term working relationship. So that's a four-fold valorization of just doing a book review. And, I don't have the frustration of constantly chasing up unreliable reviewers.

Book reviewing is one of the benchmarks listed by the Academy of Science of SA (ASSAF) when its panels evaluate local journals, and make recommendations on DHET listing. If ASSAF takes book reviewing seriously, so should all authors.

Like doing peer reviews, doing book reviews is a necessary stepping stone to something else.

Covering crucial issues in academic publishing

The issues that the open access edition of *ANFASA Magazine* (2020) covers are crucial given the state of flux across education, with higher education and academic publishing facing (unfair) increasing financial constraints. Maria Frahm-Arp's article particularly appealed to me on the point of textbook writing as academic rigour and essential to the decolonial project without leaning heavily on ideological rhetoric. Tomaselli's article on Open Access had a compelling 'mic drop' with the point that the loudest voices that take umbrage at lack of free access to academic journals don't consult their librarians is so important. A significant failure of our basic education system is that most (black) students enter a library for the first time at university and don't take the time to familiarise themselves with information science. I work with undergraduate students at the Wits Writing Centre and this comes through regularly. Even during the lockdown, many students had no idea how to familiarise themselves with their institutions' e-catalogues and, considering that librarians are the unsung 'info plugs' for students, the latter lose out from not just having an edge on their studies, but building lasting, valuable relationships with librarians – I could go on about this but I will leave it here. Copyright and intellectual property is a long game. On the point of funding models for open access book publishing, I would be keen to get some insight from 'decolonial economists' if they do exist...

Karabo K. Kgoleng
broadcaster, public speaker, writer

"A significant failure of our basic education system is that most (black) students enter a library for the first time at university and don't take the time to familiarise themselves with information science"