Academic & Non-Fiction Authors' Association of South Africa

ANFASA

Dedicated to empowering authors

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Contents

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Editorial

Making Authorship a Viable Profession

Monica Seeber

When Keyan Tomaselli invited me to write the editorial for this fourth issue of the newly-launched ANFASA magazine I chose to tackle the job head on by asking the questions 'what is an author?' and 'what does an author gain from joining ANFASA?'.

The Copyright Act terms anyone who writes even a few sentences an 'author', but what it means is anyone who 'makes' a 'work', whether a piece of writing, a drawing or a tune. That's not what I mean by my question. I'm thinking of someone who writes because they hardly have a choice, almost compelled to express thoughts, ideas and information on a page (or screen). Someone who might even write more, write for a living, quit their day job – if only they could afford to.

And what about joining an authors' organisation?

In 2003, when I was commissioned by the Norwegian association for academic and non-fiction authors to research setting up a similar body in South Africa, I set off on a road-show of the universities, talking to junior and senior academics about writing scholarly books. Many if not most of them had no plans to write anything beyond the journal articles demanded – which was troubling because in this country so much information is imported and so little knowledge, by comparison, produced locally.

> ***"a new authors' association had a job of work to do in South Africa – to stimulate would-be authors to write and established authors to write more"***

That's when I began to realise that a new authors' association had a job of work to do in South Africa – to stimulate would-be authors to write and established authors to write more. There were (and are) several authors' groups of different types. Some are for those who write in isiXhosa, or Sesotho, or Afrikaans, and so on. In others, like discussion groups, members get together and talk about their own work or the books, plays or poetry of others. Some offer awards for literary achievement. Others are for the appreciation of literature. COSAW, in its time, gave voice to struggle writing. But none was for the promotion and development of authorship itself: for nurturing authors; protecting their rights; researching the conditions affecting them (including their incomes); making authorship itself a viable professional activity.

That became the core purpose of ANFASA.

I haven't really answered either of the questions, but I hope I've stimulated a discourse, and am looking forward to getting readers' responses.

Productive Patterns amid Chaotic Complexity

Jonathan Sabbatha

Are we in a chaotic environment? An ever changing landscape? Is this a theory? *The Big Bang Theory*? NO!! Chaos theory is an interdisciplinary theory which states that, within the apparent randomness of chaotic complex systems, there are underlying patterns, interconnectedness, constant feedback loops, repetition, self-similarity, fractals, and self-organization. Well, that's what experts say.

Today, we find ourselves at the 1st anniversary of lockdown – I believe most of us are hopefully optimistic that we will return to some form of normality, however the chaos that was created through the global pandemic has resulted in what some people call a "new normal". We will not return to the way things were – change will be our constant companion in the months and years to come. If this is true, how do we harness the chaos of the day with the constant variable change? What do you think?

With the chaos of the day as the constant variable, change is having a dramatic impact on our lives, our future, our institutions, and that of our organizations, and businesses, and how we do things. Even the way we learn! And for small businesses? What is in it for you? And of course, what is in it for me! I have pondered about this reflectively! Oooh! Pondered? For Instructors (Lecturers)? Learners? Participants? Entrepreneurs? Big business? The public sector? And oooh, and the Church? Spiritual things control the natural things. That makes the spiritual mind much more valuable than the carnal mind. Or doesn't it? What do you think?

"Creativity is intelligence having fun" - **Einstein**

Reflecting on this reality as individuals, business organizations, government, labour, academic institutions, churches, Learners, aka potential knowledge workers, entrepreneurs, and Leaders, we must realize that we all form part of a system – an interconnected, complex, large system. We should strive to change. Change the way we think! Change the way we learn, work, and do things. If we drive small changes it can lead to bigger changes – bigger impacts.

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"With the chaos of the day as the constant variable, change is having a dramatic impact on our lives, our future, our institutions, and that of our organizations, and businesses, and how we do things."

Chaotic Times, Change, and Creativity

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Change is proportional to the effect it brings. Of cause, this is usually when we talk about physics. The bigger the change. the bigger the result of that change. But, a tiny stone can shatter the windscreen of your car. An amateur video can go viral, reaching millions of people all over the world. In each of these cases, it still takes energy to make a big change, but that energy can come from tiny changes distributed throughout your life, or the system, if the system is large, complex, and densely connected enough.

Small changes can make much bigger changes happen; one small incident can have a big impact on the future, like the butterfly effect.

We need to build a culture of learning. Learn to read (Africa!), to gain deeper knowledge and understanding of things, and learn to collaborate - cooperate with others. This is not the time for me, myself, and I. It is time for me and you and others! Learn to tolerate others, you are not a remote Island. There is a co-dependency in creating value in life, in a value network, or value chain (if that's what you want to call it); that is (management, employees, clients, instructors, learners, suppliers, community, government, etc.).

Do you have a plan? A creative strategy? Do you have a plan at all to move forward? Or plans to create value for your customers, and stakeholders? And, for your community? And your country? Some fella once said if you don't plan you have planned to fail. That means, you have already failed! Is this really true? No one wants to fail though, or do you? I know some people think failure is good? Do you think so? Failure is a lesson though. Wisdom comes out of challenges and failures, not successes. Have you considered any creative strategies lately? The creative strategies you may have considered for short-term survival and long-term sustainability can make a difference if you have an open mindset; hang in there beloved of God - the butterfly effect can be real for you.

Creativity is the most crucial factor for business success, and for any organization for that matter. But, you need to have an open mind - a growth mindset. And of cause, innovative initiatives! Creativity is divergent thinking, and innovation is convergent thinking. In this context of chaos and change, it reaffirms the need for us to be creative in this time of flux, global pandemic, dynamic change, and so on. Small changes that you consider over this time can have a great future impact, even if it feels like you are navigating in global darkness.

Engage in this chaos and change – we know that small changes eventually lead to big rewards and that creativity, innovation, and out-of-the-box thinking is needed so that we remain current and value-adding partners in the co-dependent value-chain - I prefer value-network. Thinking out-of-the-box! Noo! In this lockdown box! No! Not that one!

I believe that cultivating creativity in an organization will help navigate the future, especially the future we will be facing. It has already begun! The one that is chaotic and filled with change.

May I encourage you to continue to make small creative changes in this time of ambiguity and chaos; and may the changes be filled with creative and innovative flair that will support your short-term survival and long-term sustainability. Being futurely fit as an individual, a business owner, and a Leader requires an agile brain. Think outside of the box!!! Oh! There we go again! The box!

We live in a distracted world, dealing with an avalanche of information and change. Decisions are made in the blink of an eye and delivery at the speed of light.

How do we as individuals, Leaders, and/or business owners adapt rapidly, ensuring quality thinking and decision making as well as being able to learn fast? Have an appreciation of the challenges that we live in today and provide strategies, frameworks and tools on how to go about building an agile value creating life, organization/business. Glory be God for always!!! Amen.

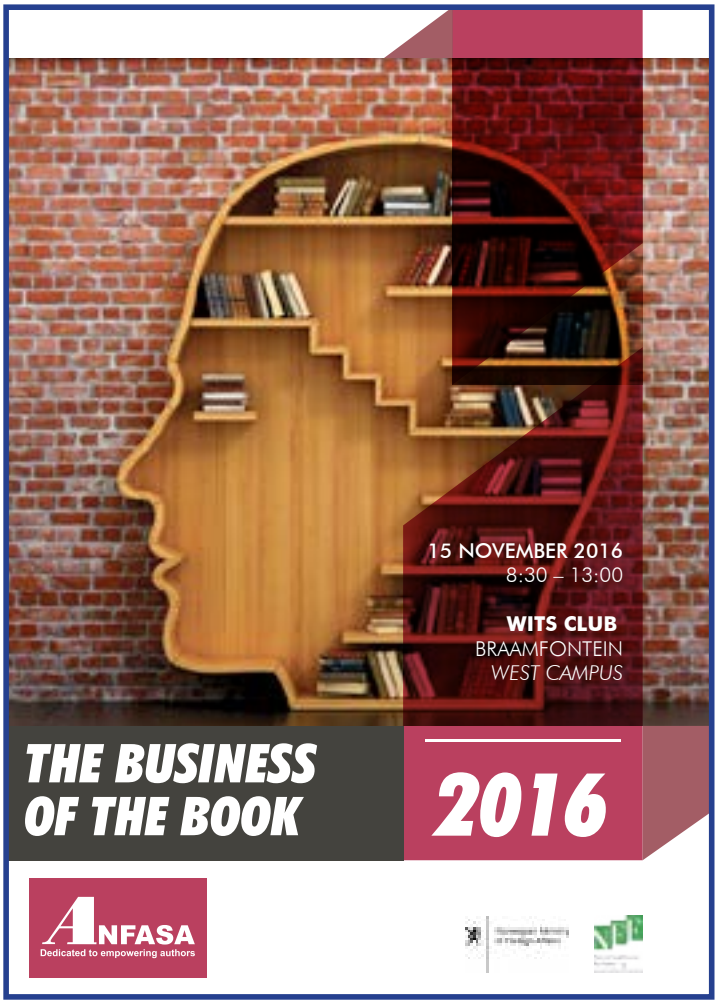
"I believe that cultivating creativity in an organization will help navigate the future, especially the future we will be facing. It has already begun! The one that is chaotic and filled with change."

Pricing: A Question of Source and Purpose

Keyan G Tomaselli

The cost of scholarly books is often an issue with students and even their lecturers. In a previous edition of the magazine, Karabo Kgoleng complained that international academic publishers operate like a greedy cartel, being little more than an "intellectual sweat shop that abuses scholars and hurts African and Global South academic presses", while "charging insane prices that cripple researchers and university libraries" (hyperlink to 2020/1).

In assessing book prices in South Africa, as Corina van der Spoel of Wits University Press (WUP) cautions, "a clear distinction needs to be made between academic text books (which mostly have high print runs because they are prescribed and are purpose written), and scholarly books (low print runs and unlikely to be prescribed)." Veronica Klipp, WUP director, agrees for the purposes of clarity that critics should clarify "between academic / textbook publishers and scholarly or university presses."



Publishers / Sweatshops

ANFASA runs an annual seminar on "The Business of the Book" that explains the complicated and expensive value chain from which books are produced. Unlike the conveyer belt manufacturing of high end running shoes that relies on outsourced ultra-cheap exploited labour from Asia that Western consumers rarely care about, the publishing industry largely invests in-house in highly skilled permanently employed staff. Amongst these are commissioning editors, copy editors and proof readers, production editors, indexers and marketing and promotional staff. Such labour costs can contribute to half of a book's production cost. Also, warehousing, distribution, packaging and shipping don't come cheap. Neither do book stores.

If we are to cost an imported scholarly book at the point of sale, the price includes exchange rates which always disadvantage Africa. The costs of shipping and handling, customs duties, VAT and digital taxes, shrinkage and insurance, shop rental, and salaries of store and administrative personnel all have to be factored into a book's price.

Books are not like other goods. When a can of beans passes its sell-by date at a supermarket, the can is trashed at minimal cost. But a book is either returned by the bookstore to the publisher, or it is remaindered at a fraction of its unit cost, causing a significant loss for the retailer. And, despite the pervasive sense of price gouging, some overseas educational publishers do actually significantly *reduce* their wholesale prices of textbooks to African markets.

Small Markets

Other than textbooks, international academic firms and university presses in particular, publish for small markets with very small print runs. The lower the print run, the higher the unit cost. Scholarly publishers take on titles that would not obtain publication elsewhere because the topic is esoteric and of limited interest, even in the academy, and which may be of little or no interest at all outside it. Intellect Books (Bristol, UK), for example, monetises this limitation by working with the author, rather than the reader, as their main customer. The subject areas that Intellect serves tend to be niche and often underfunded

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Scholarly Books and Their Prices

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within the academy. Intellect cannot always guarantee a level of sales that will cover its production costs and overheads. So, Intellect serves the author who subvents the book's costs by publishing and disseminating their content as widely as possible.

As WUP's Veronica Klipp observed of the South African case:

> University presses here function in a context of extreme austerity with little support from their parent institutions. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy: in an attempt to save costs, presses are not capacitated in terms of staff or technology; but working in this environment means that its staff members have their noses to the production grindstone, they don't get to travel, and their access to the global scholarly industry – with the potential to upskill technologically – is compromised. … Perhaps this is one of the reasons many academics prefer to publish with international publishers – their reach and impact in the territories that dominate the knowledge economy is just greater. The South African sector is, in fact, dominated by global North players, especially large commercial publishers.[1]

Over 80% of the members of the International Association of University Presses rely on financial support from their universities or parent institutions. Where local presses struggle for institutional support in order to continue disseminating research, internationally, there is a much clearer understanding of the role that university presses play in furthering the knowledge economy – and the costs associated with it. There is a clear difference between "Scholarly" versus "Academic" or prescribed titles mostly for undergraduate studies. The former can be costly with a limited market. However, the latter can be profitable depending on them being prescribed as required reading for a course. As Klipp concludes, "it is important to note that while we are struggling for the subsidisation that comes with proper recognition of our work, internationally most university presses are actually in a similar position to local presses in requiring institutional subsidies, and so the concept of 'international' also needs to (further) differentiate between large academic publishers and (small) university presses."

Cross-subsidisation

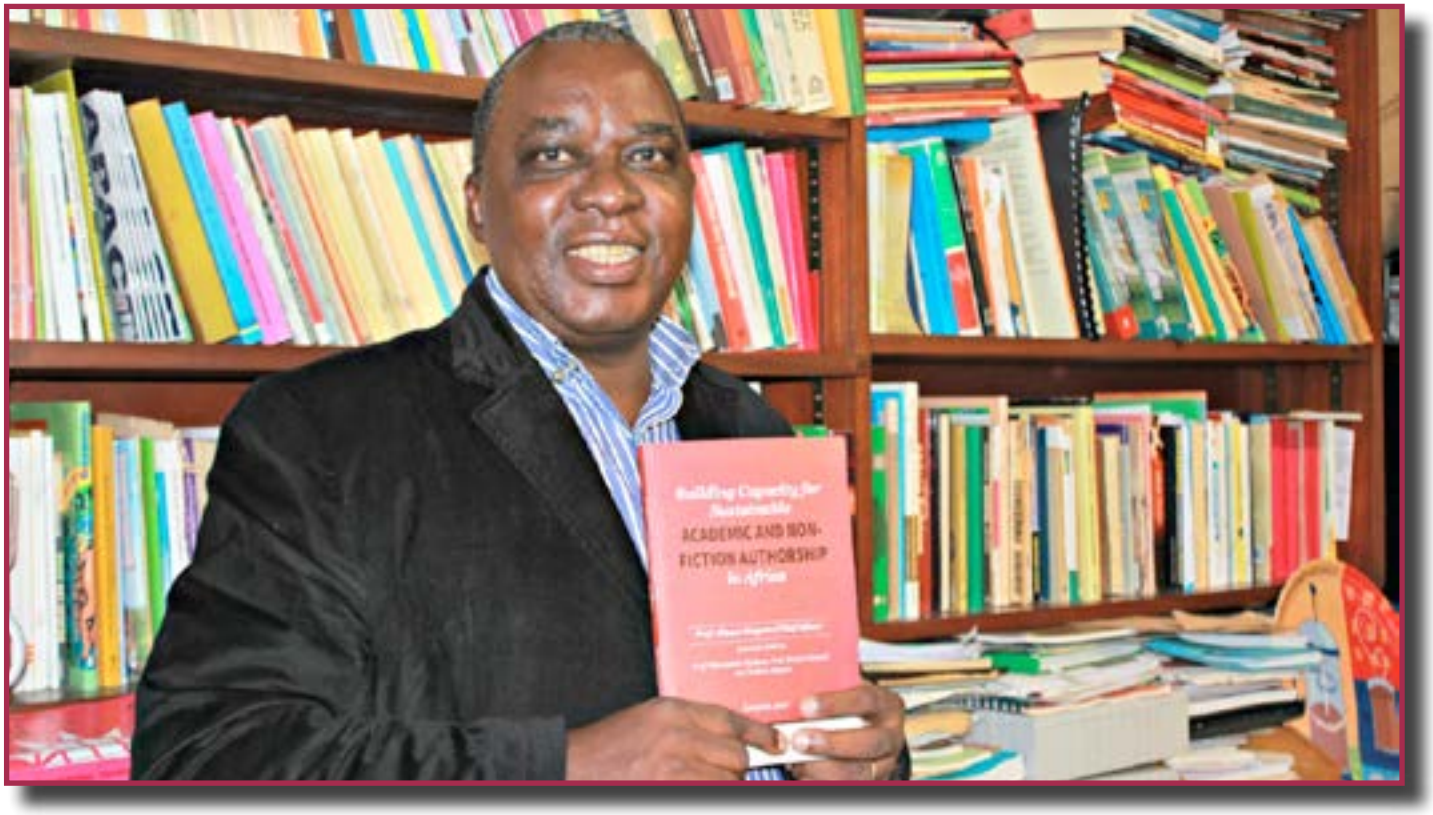
The gross profit margin of university presses "is determined by the ratios of print run to origination and print costs, and in relation to in perpetuity costs such as warehousing, distribution and stock movement globally for sales, also in relation to retail price and market take-up and when. Negative margins occur when subsidised books end up costing more money in the future or even wasting taxpayer money, so it is vital, argues Jeremy Weightman of the HSRC Press "to ensure balanced margins to be prudent about the budgets we are spending. Some scholarly publishers make the error of not knowing the margins which means current new books end up incurring huge costs in years to come." Commercial publishers would require a gross profit margin of 50% or more on each new title to be sustainable. This is not possible within any of the parameters of small presses, hence the reason that scholarly publishing often needs to strike the balance between public purpose and commercial objectives.

When the writing and reading public see high prices they assume that all publishers are swimming in money. In reality, South African academic publishers more likely ***lose*** money on scholarly niche titles. They can only continue publishing them because these books are cross-subsidised by continued sales of the textbook, back lists and/or more popular imprints. Alternatively, and increasingly, academic publishers, as does Intellect Books, are now charging authors to publish, to sustain niche titles, which imposes a price on the author who is now expected to subsidise the reader, as the publisher no longer takes the full financial risk. And, unlike the prestigious imprints like Princeton, Oxford and Cambridge University Presses, all of which have children's and young readers imprints, none of the South African university presses have such money-spinning catalogues which could cross-subsidise their niche academic titles. HSRC Press does sport its BestRed imprint that publishes socially important works that might not easily fit the 'scholarly' tag. And, Wits University Press publishes the likes of Adam Habib's *Rebels and Rage* (2019) and titles like *Fees Must Fall* edited by Susan Booysen (2018) and *Shadow State: Politics of Capture* (2018, multiple authors), analyses of breaking issues which do offer immediate commercial potential enabling cross-subsidisation.

Heleen Liebenberg of the Booksellers Association observes she would like to see "more local academics getting support to publish educational material for not just SA but for the broader African market too. Local publishers need to take the risk of seeking local title adoptions at SA universities with sustained campaigns to win over lecturers who often have studied abroad and tend to adopt international editions in reminiscence of their post-grad experiences at UK or US institutions. This is something as booksellers association, we would support as it lowers the barrier to entry for local scholarly and academic authors, reduces logistical costs and ultimately saves the taxpayer money in book allowances for funded students. The alternative is a Government mandated quota system which infringes on Academic freedoms to some degree. As the SA Booksellers Association, recent engagements with the DTI in crafting a Creative Industries Masterplan for SA to grow the contribution of the publishing sector to GDP, we have highlighted this reality and sought Government support for University presses as a factor."

And, what is an 'insane' price? Is R900, for instance, insane? This is less than one would pay for a pair of good running shoes made by outsourced labour in an actual Asian sweat shop. The shoes will wear out within a year or two, but a printed book might be useful over a life-time. The rating of the price of a high-end meticulously researched, written, edited and published book – with all the attendant costs such as marketing, warehousing and distribution – must be factored into the point of sale.

1 See http://witspress.co.za/news/wits-university-press-publisher-veronica-klipp-writes-on-the-costs-of-losing-local-research-to-global-publishers/



Editing Indigenous Language books: a critical challenge for South Africa

By Professor Sihawukele Ngubane, ANFASA Chairman

It is a fact that the very best writer is edited although book editing is an expensive exercise and a daunting exercise. In contrast to English and Afrikaans, indigenous African languages have no longstanding written tradition. They are mainly oral languages of indigenous speech communities that rely on the spoken word rather than a written text. This poses a challenge to most indigenous language writers who struggle to get it right before submission. We live in the resourceful environment where most writers have access to technology such as spell checks that happen to be in English. South Africa adopted a multilingual policy to allow all languages an opportunity to grow to the level of English and Afrikaans but most people view English as the primary language. This results in low productivity and consumption of indigenous books.

There are insufficient writers in the African indigenous languages, and the majority prefer to read in English. It is therefore fundamental that books of good quality must be available in the indigenous languages if those languages are to become the vehicles of knowledge transfer. One of the developmental problems facing writing and publishing in indigenous languages in South Africa is the lack of qualified language practitioners who understand the rules of grammar and orthography. Editors struggle to do justice to texts in these languages because there are no standardised language forms.

> ***"Editors struggle to do justice to texts in these languages because there are no standardised language forms"***

Since the start of the democratic era in 1994 the situation has become more complex for editors and proof readers of indigenous languages. Editing involves checking the text to ensure that the ideas are expressed clearly and logically, and form a coherent and meaningful whole. This requires text editors to be linguistically agile and versatile in order to ensure that the author's intended meaning is fully represented. For indigenous language academic writers who want to see their books on shelves it is essential that they produce to high standards and good books. We need more qualified or professional editors of indigenous language books to produce quality books and develop software formatting that is friendly to foreign languages. The advent of self-publishing has increased public interest in writing memoirs and biographies and there is a tendency to produce poor quality books because these authors lack expertise, especially in editing. Unfortunately, good editing is often under-rated. Good editors have to be sensitive to the cultural nuances that only mother-tongue speakers really understand, to work on shaping the content and the means of expression. Enjoy our diverse topics of this issue and spread the word about our Magazine.

Image credit: https://www.internationalpublishers.org/copyright-news-blog/1037-ipa-launches-new-state-of-publishing-reports

News for publishers from the IPA

Hetta Pieterse

Seven critical reports on the state of the global publishing world were released last year by the International Publishers Association, launched at the Frankfurt Book Fair. The launch video is available with the above link. Here is my summary:

Report 1

Report 1 covers Sustainable Development: IPA SDG Report. There are now only 10 more years left to meet the Sustainable Development Goals!

This is the first comprehensive report on the topic for publishers. There are five conclusions, here summarised:

1. Content is king (for example: SDG book club).
2. On SDGs 5 and 10: equal opportunities for everyone are created via what we publish.
3. Building/shaping the smart workforce of the future.
4. Climate action; what can we do as publishers regarding our current carbon footprint?
5. Partnerships and collaborations: There is an SDG publishers compact – the report covers how publishers can contribute to the SDGs.

Report 2

Report 2 focuses on literary policies in the world (especially from a Political Science perspective) and covers different measures and examples from all around the world. The report covers how different policies are implemented. Though there is some focus is on the European experience, the report's scope is global and looks at how policies are part of a wider policy culture sector. Media studies and cultural policy studies are also covered. The challenge of visual culture and new media are addressed, and how these fields need to be captured in policy making – this encompasses also knowledge politics. `Literary' here is used as a wider concept; it is also about the types of books we use daily in work or study – about the world in which we live.

The legal, economic, pedagogic and infrastructural measures are discussed for all policies. The Report also crucially covers freedom of expression. The report points to the importance of providing economic support for the medium of the book; how we teach in modern society; and the role of the book in teaching.

Report 3

Report 3 is on Copyright: This is an essential reference document, covering 69 countries. Profiles are provided per country, which cover copyright frameworks and especially which countries had signed the three crucial Treaties, namely the Berne Convention, the Copyright Treaty and the Marrakech Treaty – as the three are crucial to copyright and copyright conditions. Each country's copyright conditions are outlined, how these are enforced, exceptions, and limitations are offered. The Report is augmented with a legal overview and presentations which go beyond the law to offer perspectives in practice (such as how different policies have tackled tricky issues relating to modern media). The Report is a first in terms of its Comparative Law review across the world – potentially assisting policy makers to instil strong copyright protection per country.

Report 4

The fourth is the Freedom to Publish Report: The Report covers the challenges encountered to publish, while countries

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of concern are named. The IPA is committed to promote and defend copyright which is under siege today, and the Report is part of its mandate. The information stems from a survey done among IPA members, case studies and reports from international organisations. The Freedom to publish is described in many countries – this freedom varies around the world. But there are violations in many areas and within countries due to governments and certain state regimes. Where works are considered dangerous or inappropriate, the public interest is often not considered. The question of self-censorship is raised – some publishers think twice when they consider the consequences of producing certain content in certain countries due to the existence of draconian laws in some countries – this places the legal burden on authors and publishers. A lack of freedom to publish also affects booksellers and librarians – potentially stopping the dissemination of information, and depriving readers of vital content. Government interference is revealed. The IPA intends to help NGOs with the publishing of crucial content. The freedom to publish needs to be internationally defended to ensure it makes room for new knowledge, critical opposition and artistic expression.

Report 5

Report 5 is on Reading Matters: Learning to read is the key to how we can fully express ourselves, and how we participate in society. This key skill opens the of doors of education and lifelong learning. Surveys from sixteen countries over five years are provided, covering different approaches. Four key areas are identified: Which population groups read, for what purpose and what type of books are read, and how many books are being read. Unfortunately, we now read less, considering the last twenty years. The book sector should worry about the decrease in reading especially among young people. The rise of social media and video platforms compete with reading and other entertainment.

While the number of non-readers have increased, there are more who want to read, which is positive. The IPA must act as ambassadors for reading. The plan is to do a survey campaign, how to retain readers, firstly working with governments and organisations and then towards international cooperation. The literacy rates need to be higher, and a love of reading needs to be developed. The Report contains different examples of activities used (it provides ideas on how to promote reading in individual countries). It was difficult to compare surveys on reading across differing countries – and a new project is afoot to develop more equitable survey measures.

Report 6

Report 6 is entitled Paper or Digital; it contains current research into the effectiveness of learning materials. The Covid19 pandemic accelerated the use of e-learning sources. Sometimes materials were available, and in other cases some had to scramble to catch up despite lockdowns and school closures. The current pandemic created a need for home schooling and distance learning, but which modes are `not a template for the future'. Concrete evidence is needed before committing to high quality low-level adapted educational resources. Doubt is cast on the efficiency of some digital learning resources which have emerged. The Report goes beyond educational research and is meant for publishers' associations, educational publishers and with teachers in mind, on how to tackle the digital transition. Governments and teachers will find information on how to adapt to achieve the best possible digital education. The Report also compares paper books with digital, and looks at how artificial intelligence can be used. Ethical considerations with digital conversion are also covered. One of the verdicts are: Even digital natives need books.

Report 7

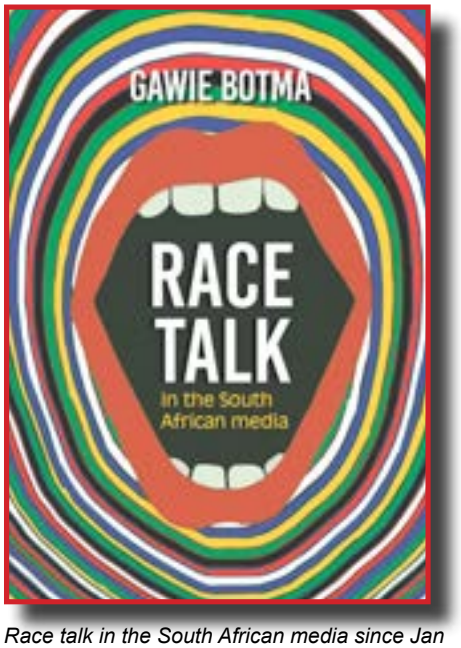
Report 7, Licensing practices in a global digital market has now also been finalised. Licensing is the lifeblood of publishers' economic models, and governs how publishers take works into the market. There are four types of publishers, namely trade, educational, academic and scholarly – they all use different business models. Licensing is essential, especially within the digital delivery mode. Current licensing is flexible, resilient, and innovative in how to market content. These are some of the main ways for all publishers to find readers for the content that they have licensed or bought. The Report covers publishing in Africa, Asia, Europe and America. The scientific, technical and medical sector is covered, as well as the secondary market regulated by collective organisations. Publishers, as investors in content, want return on their investment. If successfully licensed, this stimulates the publishing market. But the industry cannot work for nothing; it depends on how Intellectual Property (or IP) is properly respected. Efficient licensing is a cultural mechanism ensuring a healthy publishing market, and in ensuring quality content. The right to protect the public's right to know is fundamental to modern society's international economic prosperity. Action is needed to create appropriate stable frameworks to protect the rights of authors and publishers. Licensing is the perfect vehicle – being flexible, it can be tailored to local needs. This also has a positive impact on the creation of new content. In countries where copyright is not protected, there was a collapse in the supply of new locally produced content. Publishing business models therefore need to be protected by adequate legal frameworks of copyright. The Report is aimed at publishers and publishers' associations, given it captures key practices around world and substantiated with case studies. The report also addresses policy makers of different levels.

The Report spans the following six chapters:

- Educational publishing in the digital era
- What is education for the 21st century? The Singapore experience
- Licensing: Experiences and perspectives from Africa
- The licensing of original work for education: an author's perspective
- The role of collective licensing
- Overview of STM research publishing and licensing practices

Book Review

Articulating a Contested and Contentious Space



Race talk in the South African media since Jan van Riebeeck. By Gawie Botma. SunPress, Stellenbosch, 2019. 226pp. ISBN. 978-928480-28-0.

Keyan G Tomaselli

Race Talk navigates the following topics: Dutch colonial race talk; Race talk in the white colonial press during British rule; Race talk in the black press during colonialism and apartheid; Black Consciousness and race talk in the mainstream media; Race talk in the Afrikaans press during apartheid; Race talk in the English and alternative press during apartheid; The law and race talk in the media; Race talk and winds of change in the media; Race talk in the digital media age; and Academic race talk in the media.

Race Talk is based on meticulous archival research presented in a new, fresh and highly engaging way. Indeed, the back cover blurb by André Rose observes that race "is a highly contested and contentious space" and that it is "particularly arduous for a 'white, middle-class, middle-aged, Afrikaans male'" to successful navigate this space. That, Botma has done admirably.

A journalism lecturer at Stellenbosch University, Gawie Botma's expressive flair shines through every page. He agrees with the claim that South Africas' problems started with Jan van Riebeeck in 1652, but he argues that the country's modern history also "began" with him. As an avid "blogger", suggests Botma, van Riebeeck wrote his history of the times. This kind of quirky historicisation permeates Botma's analysis throughout, thus making 'history' come alive, even in these anti-history, anti-colonial, anti-settler and anti-van Riebeeck times. Such monologues have flattenened nuance from always complex and contending historical narratives. Unpacking these discourses is the objective of Botma's examination of historical and contemporary articulations of 'race talk' – sourced by him back to the mid-1600s.

For a society now totally fixated on race, especially after so-called liberation, Botma reveals that this was not always so. Indeed, the South African idiosyncrasies are exposed by Shannon Landers in this issue where she examines how one is racified, classified and positioned by those with whom one interacts. Botma similarly enables the meanings to emerge from their specific everyday historical usages and linguistic contexts. He traces changes, shifts and re-articulations and explains how they move from being positive to pejorative. One thinks of the attacks during March 2021 on ex-Wits vice chancellor, Adam Habib, by students and staff at the School for African and Oriental Studies, London, where he tried, perhaps naively, to interrogate one of these boo words, a currently pejorative noun, on his new appointment, only to find himself starkly at the receiving end of cancel culture.[1]

Botma's textual unfolding of terms like race and its associations transports the reader through the history in a fascinating telling. In light of this, was it predictable that a struggle stalwart like Habib would have lost his mojo in ahistorical, de-contextualised, and un-reconstructed British race talk?

In the process of de-constructing these discursive moments, Botma's book becomes all the more interesting and is made wonderfully accessible to get to the appealing and somewhat surprising – in terms of conventional wisdom – underlying story.

Race Talk implictly cautions the populist binary race arguments of whites vs blacks, and it fractures the reductive contemporary populist Fanonesque-derived endlessly cited epithets that assume intractable homogeneities as historically characterising 'race' conflict. Botma reveals conceptual cracks, ideological contradictions, political contestations, differences, changing alliances and shifting allegiances, indicated in lexical changes in language over time.

It fractures race-talking taken-for-granteds, and offers an evidentiary history that has been largely smothered by contemporary political slogans.

Botma invites readers to think about how the author positions himself as writer/researcher/raced. He clearly exhibits a highly problematised relationship with Dutch/Afrikaner history which adds to the depth and nuance of his analysis as a whole.

Botma applies an inductive method, largely moving from the particular to the general, in that the final chapter is where the various conceptual and theoretical strands that emerge from the nitty gritty archival work are brilliantly and accessibly stitched together into a broader theoretically-based argument of wider significance that draws on some South African race literature. This is carried through to the very compelling conclusion.

1 South African academics back SOAS chief in n-word row, by Edwin Naidoo: https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210326064521697

Finding My Voice in Academia

Shannon Leigh Landers[1]

A google search for *a guide to writing your master's dissertation* offers clinical advice on the importance of reading, preparation, and choosing the correct topic and supervisor. However, these tips often neglect the human aspect of this stressful undertaking – mental health. Maintaining mental health is imperative (if not, the most crucial part of the journey). Many students often experience imposter syndrome or crippling anxiety at the mere thought of this mammoth endeavour. The fear is sometimes aided by being the first in your family to pursue a Bachelor's degree, let alone a Master's qualification.

Another major stressor is the disconnection between students' material and symbolic experiences and the concepts taught. The lack of representation and the re-presentation of foreign values and ideas render students feeling powerless, even voiceless. However, acknowledging our position of being on the fringe of complex social phenomena also presents a plethora of opportunities for young scholars.

I found refuge in the interdisciplinary field of Cultural Studies because of its bricolage approach to understanding power relations. It helped me recognise that my decentred position is significant because there is meaning in absence. This acknowledgement rewired my thinking and helped me realise that my contribution to scholarship is necessary. The insight garnered from my Master's dissertation enabled me to rationalise the signifying practices that result in moral panics like the Black Lives Matter protests, Clicks TRESemmé debacle and the insurrection on Capitol Hill.

While recently reading an article by Stuart Hall[2] on Louis Althusser's contribution to the reconceptualisation of ideology, I marvelled at his anecdotal account of being part of a 'Coloured' Jamaican family who found social currency in being classified as 'not black'. Perhaps, I related to his complex experience with race as it overlaps with my experience as a 'Coloured' South African. He further explained how his family clung to this classificatory system like an ideological lifeline as it distanced them from the unfavourable signifying chain of blackness. Ironically, when Hall relocated to Britain, on a Rhodes Scholarship, blackness was imposed upon him because, in all its simplicity, he was not white. I imagine that his interpellation into these disparate subject positions marked a critical moment in his academic trajectory.

The anxiety we feel about our displacement as budding academics (or Master's graduates) presents an opportunity to carve a space for ourselves in meta-discourses. Of course, this does not negate the necessity of decolonising higher education, and subsequently academic scholarship; but I caution against radical attempts to eradicate existing knowledge fields from curricula. Moments of contestation, frustration and anxiety should compel us to articulate and assert our subject position, no matter how insignificant (or insecure) we feel.

Like many young South African scholars, I am the first in my family to obtain a Master's degree. I had no familial reference point – aside from my supervisor, Professor Ruth Teer-Tomaselli. At times, anxiety would cloud my mind, and I would find great difficulty stringing words together to form a coherent sentence. However, I ultimately managed to quell my anxiety by surrounding myself with a sound support system and finally realising that attaining my master's was a necessary stepping stone if I desired diverse representation in academia.

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2 Hall, S. (1985) Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication,* 2(2), pp. 91 -114.