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ANFASA Seminar: Porcupine Press Presentation

Massive change brings new opportunities

David Robbins*

Porcupine Press's self publishing handbook

In 1973, freshly returned to SA after a seven-year sojourn in the United Kingdom, I opened a bookshop in Howick. I ordered books directly from British paperback publishers like Penguin, and from publishers in South Africa, even though there weren't all that many of them. I'd send my orders off in the post and a fortnight later, the books would arrive. My bookshop was generally given a 33.3% discount on the retail price, but sometimes we were offered even less, sometimes all the way down to 15%. And there was no such thing as SOR (sale or return). All new books had to be bought outright by the bookshop.

Of course, the situation has now been turned on its head. Bookshops no longer purchase any stock, but accept it only on SOR. The discount demanded by bookshops ranges from 45% to 50%, and the publisher's recommended retail price, although it is used to determine what the publisher is paid (less of course the hefty discounts), is often added to by the bookshops with no profit sharing with publisher or author.

This power imbalance between bookshops and publishers has of course been exacerbated by the technological revolution in the printing and typesetting fields, and by the rise of desktop- and self-publishing solutions. There are several examples of internationally known traditional publishers spawning self-publishing outfits of dubious quality simply so that the traditional parent can stay afloat. The inevitable result of these uncertainties has been for the big players in publishing to close ranks.

While in the UK I lived in London and worked in Tottenham Court Road. I often strolled round the corner and along to Russell Square

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* David Robbins is the proprietor of the Porcupine Press

> ***"This power imbalance between bookshops and publishers has been exacerbated by the technological revolution in the printing and typesetting fields, and by the rise of desktop- and self-publishing solutions"***

ANFASA Seminar: Porcupine Press Presentation

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where, in the late sixties, many of the lovely old Victorian houses were given over to an array of Britain's famous publishing houses. Few exist any longer as independent business entities, although many continue as imprints inside the huge publishing conglomerates that are taking over the publishing world. The balance of power between bookshops and publishers is possibly being restored – but at what cost?

I tread on controversial ground with my reply, but here it is: The loser in the trends I have briefly described does seem to be literature, especially **provincial literature**.

How should **literature** be defined here? I think of Doris Lessing who said that people (this is my rather free paraphrase) would tire of things international and consumed by billions and would begin to long for the small, quiet voices of those writers who work without sniffing too eagerly at the various trend machines. Lessing suggests that these longings would build confidence in writers to be themselves, and that the combination of longing and confidence would give rise to another great age of literature.

And how should **provincial** be defined? Obviously, it has to do with locality, local people doing locally relevant things. It seems inevitable that the best of this writing will take the reader from small to big: in other words will imbue the local with a grasp of the whole human condition in a way that rarely happens the other way around.

So what is happening to the small quiet voices that Lessing has described and that I think are the makers of good provincial literature as I have just described it? I think many are falling through the cracks in the highly polished floors of the mainstream conglomerates where risk publishing has gone out of fashion and the financial bottom-line rules the uppermost roost.

But it's not all bad news. Underneath the floorboards is the underground, and in the underground is a growing network of new-wave publishers. They call themselves self-publishers, hybrid publishers, independent publishers, and they're developing new financing and distribution models, as well as new marketing techniques. However, as in all under-the-floorboards spaces, it's pretty dark and full of unseen hazards. I'm talking here about the so-called publishers who have never themselves opened a book, editors who have hardly read any, designers who have never noticed what beautiful books look like, and the financial chaps who rake in the dough as fast as they possibly can. Most of these 'publishers' have never thought about distribution. They prefer not to go there because the bookshops are fussy and they reject books that are amateurishly slapped together.

All this causes some disillusion to the writers in the underground, but perhaps not as much as do those cultural caretakers who claim that real writing does not take place underneath the floorboards, that the new-wave publishers are not real publishers, and that the books that emerge don't deserve to be taken seriously. Of course, the cultural caretakers are often correct in that rather sniffily elitist judgement. Without a doubt, the problem of basic standards looms like recurring warning signs everywhere under the floorboards.

But I assert that's where literature will thrive, especially in the developing countries of the world where literacy and literature tend to develop side-by-side, where books are closer to the streets than to the shrines of high learning, and where all manner of writers with shining eyes are looking for ways to break through. They want to write and they want to be read.

Porcupine Press lives under the floorboards. That's where our *modus operandi* has been developed. We stepped onto a tiny corner of the publishing stage in 2009, and we did so with a very clear business model. We would produce quality books and we would distribute and sell them.

If you'd like further information, email online@porcupinepress.co.za for more detail about how we work, always emphasising the way in which we try to maintain quality and work towards our overarching goal of helping to lay the foundations of a thriving grassroots books culture for writers and readers in SA.

"But it's not all bad news. Underneath the floorboards is the underground, and in the underground is a growing network of new-wave publishers. They call themselves self-publishers, hybrid publishers, independent publishers, and they're developing new financing and distribution models, as well as new marketing techniques."

A Post-doctoral Perspective on Academic Publishing

Is Academic Publishing Personal?
Lessons from my Postdoctoral Publishing

Addamms Songe Mututa*

I am now at the tail-end of my postdoctoral studies at the University of Cape Town. For the past two years, I have had a challenging, yet exciting research journey. In this contribution, I will share my experience of academic writing and publishing.

My initial attempt to write journal articles was in 2018. It was very challenging. My submissions to journals were repeatedly rejected. Initially, this was quite disheartening, which gave way to frustration.

For a considerable time, I had much self-doubt about my capacity to be published. However, this has changed over the past two years. What worked, and what I wish to share here, is the inner transformation in my approach to academic writing, the accompanying intellectual re-orientation which was necessary as I shifted from 'thesis writing mentality' to actual academic publishing, and the role that postdoctoral mentorship has had in this process.

Inner Transformation

Handling article rejection was, for me, a hard reality. After waiting for months for the peer review process, it felt very disheartening for days or weeks[1]. The biggest transformation in my academic writing happened when I realized that I was approaching the publishing process very personally; and stopped taking the rejections personally. After a period of personal reflection, I sensed that much of my sadness was because of my over-ambition and not investing sufficiently in pre-requisite academic writing skills. The main reason is because I completed my doctorate rather later than I had planned. I approached the publishing process with a sense of urgency trying to grow my academic profile faster than was

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1 See, for example, Keyan Tomaselli (2015) Practices in scholarly publishing: making sense of rejection, *Critical Arts*, 29:6, 713-724, DOI: 10.1080/02560046.2015.1151107

"The biggest transformation in my academic writing happened when I realized that I was approaching the publishing process very personally; and stopped taking the rejections personally."

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A Post-doctoral Perspective on Academic Publishing

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reasonable. Imposing this ambition upon the publishing process, and expecting the journals to 'do something' about it was a major limitation for me. Now I have learnt to be considerably more patient with the publishing process.

I have come to accept the process as a quality-driven cycle rather than a need-driven cycle, and thus I make submissions without over-burdening myself with over-expectation. This, I would say, has enabled me to be more at peace with the publishing process and its rigidities.

What I learnt, and perhaps what I would mention about this initial experience is that anxiety sometimes makes one less productive, and may lead to more rejected submissions as it obstructs one's judgement.

What paid off was to improve the quality of my work, and thus improve myself in the process. For the past two years, I have been able to publish several articles and a book[2], partly due to this inner transformation which allowed me to seek continuous improvement rather than sulk over what appears, in retrospect, a lazy-mindset avoiding the hard work typical of the publishing industry.

Intellectual re-orientation

My intellectual transformation, which followed soon after I decided to moderate my publishing ambition, started with a question: What is the use of what I write, beyond it being merely a mental activity? This self-introspection, which happened rather quickly as I sought to meet the postdoctoral publishing requirements, enabled me to critique my work more keenly.

I sought to know what was the use of the things I write about, what benefit would they offer to anyone wishing to engage with my research area, even from other disciplines, and whether they could offer – even if implicitly – some real-world usefulness. Some of my motivation came from reading the works of top scholars, which challenged me to pursue serious intellectual improvement. Obviously, there is no end to this process, and what has happened is I now see myself as a student of those in whose footsteps I follow.

The more I read their work, the more motivated I am to think better. This has helped in shaping my writing; how I construct ideas, the arguments I propose, the mental frameworks I use. And so, now, whenever I start to write, I always start with the question: what exactly is the use of my writing? Is there something in the ideas I am working with, which may be rhizomic to other ideas, or motivate alternative knowledge pursuits? It is not easy, but it is helping me think more clearly about the work I offer for publishing.

Mentorship

My just-ending postdoctoral fellowship at the African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town, has also taught me the priceless value of academic mentorship, particularly in writing and publishing. My Principal Investigator, Professor Edgar Pieterse has been very supportive of my publishing process, particularly my most recently published book.

From this interaction, I gained two invaluable lessons: one, that a good working relationship with your supervisor goes a long way in your intellectual development; and two, that working under the mentorship of intellectual superiors is very helpful in growing one's research quality.

Seeing the excellent research output of my postdoctoral supervisor challenges me to work harder to become a better scholar. Though I am making only baby steps so far, I am most appreciative for all intellectual apprenticeship that has been accorded me, and even more, for that which is underway.

"I gained two invaluable lessons: one, that a good working relationship with your supervisor goes a long way in your intellectual development; and two, that working under the mentorship of intellectual superiors is very helpful in growing one's research quality"

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2 Addamms Mututa, (2021), *Crisis Urbanism and Postcolonial African Cities in Postmillennial Cinema*, London: Routledge (DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003122098)

Storytelling: The Lessons Across The Generations

Telling Stories, Writing Experience

Mkhonzeni L Gumede*

Kwasukasukela is the call of the storyteller. Come and listen, or in this case, read my story. It begins when I joined Drama in Aids Education in 1993 after graduating from the University of Zululand (UniZulu). In 1997 I became the Project Manager, and then in 2009, I became DramAidE Director until 2016.

My entrance from a traditional society into the chaotic modernity of the so-called literate society as represented by UniZulu was one of abrupt culture shock. I had grown up in a rural area where storytelling shares knowledge, history, beliefs and customs across generations. My first exposure at the university residence encountered loud music, noise, drunkenness and promiscuity. Decades earlier, however, my first primary school year had occurred in a mud house with no partitioning, without proper doors, windows or furniture. On cold days we brought firewood from home and made a fire in the centre of the classroom. We sat around the fire, and our teacher would tell us Bible stories. Older women (*Gogos*) would sit us in a circle during short breaks and tell us stories. We were all (oral) authors and audiences then, learning in a convivial communal environment.

One story is about a boy who met a wrinkled and grey-haired old man who could barely walk. The boy laughed at him, mocking his age and appearance. This boy, who could not stop laughing, eventually became a cat.

At the time, I took the story literally and never mocked old people because I really thought that I would turn into a cat. In hindsight, I realised that the story is about the need to respect our elders. In wrestling with culture shock, this story enabled me to negotiate the seeming lack of social norms in the university residences. The fact that this boy became a cat suggested that something unusual beyond the boy's control might happen. There is a belief that when old people die, they become ancestors and bring you good or bad luck. Death in this context is conceptualised as *ukudlula* (passing on), which is a transition into the living dead where ancestors use their supernatural powers to continue their influence in the community. They are understood to have the power to harm or leave one vulnerable to sorcery, diseases and forces of nature such as lightning. When an older person, usually a man, burns *impepho* (incense) and speaks to the ancestors, it represents a convergence of the lived world and the metaphysical world. This is reflective of his belief system and understanding of the interaction of the living and the dead by speaking to the ancestors directly. Soon, they will also be ancestors in possession of supernatural powers; and will use them to return the favour.

"There is a belief that when old people die, they become ancestors and bring you good or bad luck. Death in this context is conceptualised as ukudlula (passing on), which is a transition into the living dead where ancestors use their supernatural powers to continue their influence in the community."

The story reveals that different communities have varied notions of reality. I grew up believing in a version of reality that changed as I became an adult and came face-to-face with varying constructions of the external world, including a scientific view. Elements of both the transcendental and scientific views coalesced into forming a 'mixed reality of existence'. This complex interaction between these worlds plays itself out in everyday living. For instance, the debate around HIV/AIDS treatment in South Africa epitomised this complex interaction. One view was that antiretroviral drugs are toxic, and this story favoured herbal remedies purported to contain antiretroviral properties such as *ubhejane*, garlic, lemon and *ilabatheka* (African potato).

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Storytelling: The Lessons Across The Generations

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An alternative view that favoured medical intervention includes regular testing to monitor the viral load so that antiretroviral therapy can be implemented. The two versions clash, as the simultaneous use of herbal remedies and antiretroviral drugs, may lead to drug interaction rendering both ineffective.

These early experiences suggest that the gap between indigenous knowledge and the new ways of thinking followed by scientific interpretations of the literate world was to some extent bridged. However, tension remains between oral modes of verifying and perpetuating cultural 'truth', including core values and the 'truth' of the written word, superimposed on a traditional culture.

In my MA thesis, I argue that culture is constantly changing and is a way of making sense and negotiating a variety of different meanings. There is a tendency in literate societies to value the written word over the spoken word because it is argued that the written word carries a legacy of established knowledge. It is easy to reject indigenous knowledge as 'unverified' because of the difficulty of proving its basis, as most are undocumented. A transition into literate society always involves a struggle of that which is 'true' by virtue of authority and that which can be verified because of the massive volume of documented material (Tomaselli 2003:432).

Nevertheless, in South African rural communities, the oral tradition continues to thrive. It plays an essential role in transmitting information and preserving cultural norms and values, such as respect for the elders and caring for and supporting one another. It thrives not only because many people are non-literate but also because of the sense of authenticity of the spoken word and familiar stories, chants, rhymes, and songs in transmitting cultural norms and values from one generation to another.

"There is a tendency in literate societies to value the written word over the spoken word because it is argued that the written word carries a legacy of established knowledge. It is easy to reject indigenous knowledge as 'unverified' because of the difficulty of proving its basis, as most are undocumented"

Choosing between the spoken word and the written word depends on the target audience. Non-literate societies depend on relationships of personal authority, and people give credence to those in authority through lineage and patronage (Tomaselli, 2003:431). For such societies, storytelling may be more appropriate where role models and known community leaders may be used to champion, for example, a work ethic.

Here is a rhyme, *Nomavila,* known in most areas in KwaZulu-Natal:

*We Nomavila (*This is the name of a person called '*laziness')*
Kuyalinywa: ngiyafa ngiyafa (When we are ploughing the fields, Nomavila is sick)
*Kuyatshalwa: ngiyafa ngiyafa (*When we plant seeds*, Nomavila* is sick*)*
*Kuyahlakulwa: ngiyafa ngiyafa (*When we clear the weeds*, Nomavila* is sick*)*
*Kuyavunwa: ngiyafa ngiyafa (*When we reap the fields*, Nomavila* is sick*)*
*Kuyadliwa: aqhwishi umlenzana (*When we eat, *Nomavila* is well and playing*)*

This rhyme is about a girl, Nomavila, who provides excuses for not working and is aimed at discouraging laziness. This and other rhymes are now part of the Zulu language syllabus in the lower grades in schools.

Stories, rhymes, folklore and customs provide rich repertoires to understand and interpret our universes. The spoken word is an essential element for understanding indigenous philosophies, spirituality, and people's lived reality in these communities. It helps in externalising inner thoughts, feelings, deeply held beliefs and aspirations. It further assists in negotiating new realities as we make sense of our environment, the world and the universe.

Though growing up in this tradition, I have been educated in Western ways of knowing. The university tradition requires me to share the understanding that I have in a conventional written form. So, I recognise the importance and pleasure of reading and writing. Where this Magazine focuses primarily on publishing experiences, I am making an argument about the value of indigenous storytelling as a form of authorship in coping between lived cultures.

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Indexing: The Art of Building a Lattice of Access Points

There's More to Indexing Than a List of Keywords

Christopher Merrett*

Surely in this age of computerisation indexes and indexers are an anachronism? Many books are available in electronic format and searchable online via keywords. And even if hardcopy is the only option, a computer can produce an index in no time.

The answer to this assumption is that no, all a computer program can produce without considerable human intervention is a list that would still require editing and organisation to fashion into an index. Indexing is an art, a selective and sometimes subjective process. Search a PDF version of a book and it will reveal every occurrence of a keyword or phrase regardless of relevance or importance. A good example is a substantive reference compared with the same term used in a string of examples.

Context is crucial. The old joke that a computer cannot distinguish between a Venetian blind and a blind Venetian is no longer true, but the contextual issue is still valid.

In essence, the indexer is deconstructing a text and building a lattice of access points that involves hierarchy (sub-headings) and linkage (see and see also references). Many books require simply a name index – people, corporate bodies, places and legislation, for instance – but strictly speaking this is just a list. And, indeed, a computer program could produce and alphabetise it once the indexer has flagged the required terms. It would still require human editing.

But the indexing of concepts required for academic works is an intellectual process that goes far beyond automation because it involves the world of meaning and context. The indexer asks questions: what does this sentence or paragraph mean? And how might the potential reader search for this content? This is how indexing terms are established. Many of them will have multiple page references and for this reason require sub headings that need categorisation to bring together similar content.

The key to this issue is the difference between a list and an index. The latter results in a complex construction that is the product of a human mind: take a good look at any well-constructed index in a substantial academic work.

One of the intriguing aspects of compiling such an index is the insight it provides into the writing. A well-organised book shapes an indexing process that moves smoothly, its logic reflected in access points. A repetitious, poorly organised book results in a revolving door of page references to the same terms that usually defy sub-division.

A largely unappreciated aspect of the indexing process is that the indexer is (or should be) a final pair of eyes, a proofreader of last resort. Nearing a hundred book indexes I have never come across a text, even the cleanest, that has not yielded at least a handful of typographical or factual errors. The highest likelihood is variant forms of fore-, family or corporate names that become glaringly obvious in an index. But common-or-garden typos pop up with regularity.

Rumours of the redundancy of the indexer are much exaggerated.

"The key to this issue is the difference between a list and an index. The latter results in a complex construction that is the product of a human mind: take a good look at any well-constructed index in a substantial academic work"

* Christopher Merrett is a historian, previously Director of Administration at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and a professional indexer. His website, "From the Thornveld" carries his extensive compendium of book reviews and social commentaries. The book reviews are also published on the ANFASA website. Christopher is an ANFASA Honorary member.

How to Avoid Publishing Rejections

"Win Win" Partnerships towards Academic Success

Dr Julie Grant*

For many aspiring academics the transition from PhD candidate to post-doctoral research fellow is a challenging one. Fellowships are often a stepping-stone to a more permanent academic position and as such the individual is usually required to publish articles in academic journals to build their academic profile. While some may have published before; for many this is a new and daunting experience.

When reviewing academic articles for a variety of academic journals I was at times presented with papers that required much work; had I been the editor I would have rejected them without review. For example, I was asked to review a paper that was clearly lifted from a thesis with the sub-heading "Chapter One," no effort had been made to adapt the chapter into an article. Essentially, I advised the author on how to adapt their chapter through the peer-review process. While some journals' editors do send such submissions for review, it can be frustrating and a time-consuming process for reviewers.

On another occasion I was asked to review the same paper four times before it reached the academic requirements of the journal. To me, it seemed that these authors would have benefited from more pre-submission support to ensure that the article was of a sufficient standard. Such support is often more effective if administered in a practice-based format.

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Instead of attending courses on how to write journal articles for example, a time efficient way to reach a number of would-be authors at one time, individuals often better absorb information if they attempt to write an article and then a mentor works with them to ensure that the paper is of submission quality. This can be a time-consuming process, requiring multiple reviews by the mentor/reviewer and multiple revisions by the author.

With similar concerns in mind, Prof Keyan G Tomaselli, the Editor in Chief of Critical Arts academic journal, negotiated

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"rather than being given a "desk rejection," the editors will provide support and suggestions to enable the author to produce an article that can be sent for peer review"

How to Avoid Publishing Rejections

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a partnership between Critical Arts and its publisher, Taylor & Francis and UNISA Press, in conjunction with the Universities of Johannesburg and KwaZulu-Natal, hosts of Critical Arts, and The National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS). The year-long project will facilitate the publishing of post-doctoral research fellows' articles through a dedicated edition of the interdisciplinary *Critical Arts*. A call for papers was circulated to post-doctoral researchers based in South African universities.

After the submission of abstracts, 22 were chosen, and authors have been invited to submit complete articles to the journal. Webinars were held with the chosen authors to provide guidance on preparing articles for submission, and the submission and peer-review processes; thereby educating authors on publication systems, including the reason for what often seem to be lengthy timelines between submission, reviews and publication. Unlike the conventional submission process if an article falls short of peer-review requirements, rather than being given a "desk rejection," the editors will provide support and suggestions to enable the author to produce an article that can be sent for peer review. Time is a crucial factor in the project, however; only if authors submit articles in a timely manner will it be possible for the editors to work with them. All in all, the project provides a win-win opportunity for post-doctoral fellows and their institutions; the fellow gets published, thereby building their academic profile while meeting the requirements of their fellowship, and in turn their institution receives the much sought after DoHET subsidy.

The project not only focuses on facilitating academic writing and publishing. ANFASA is also a partner, receiving funds to publish four issues of the ANFASA Magazine. Two issues (including this one) of the magazine have already arisen form the partnership and the publication is currently soliciting articles by recent graduates, postdoctoral fellows, and current graduate students that focus on the process of research writing and publication experiences. As Professor Tomaselli has noted "Where the SA Journal of Science addresses policy matters regarding research, and The Conversation publishes on research content, the ANFASA Magazine has picked up the mantle more broadly on issues of authorship" (2001, 10).

The South African Education Research Association (SAERA) also picked up on the project and requested Critical Arts/ ANFASA to lead their pre-conference workshop, *Working for Change,* on the 10th November 2021. Monica Seeber, founder of ANFASA, introduced the work of the organisaion before Critical Arts representatives Prof Lauren Dyll and Dr Julie Grant discussed the project, specifically the efforts being made to aid publication by emerging scholars. A panel of PhD candidates, post-doctoral fellows and emerging scholars then engaged in a discussion on their experiences and challenges regarding their writing careers thus far.

Overall, the institutional pressure to publish can be alienating and overwhelming for emergent scholars. This project will better educate researchers regarding publishing processes, and through experiential learning it will enhance the probability of scholarly publications, while encouraging ethical scholarship practices. As Critical Arts in an international journal authors will also be exposed to international audiences. Essentially, authors will be able to locate themselves within the broader national development project to raise the profile, and highlight the quality of African academic scholarship, and what the African academy has to offer the world.

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"Essentially, authors will be able to locate themselves within the broader national development project to raise the profile, and highlight the quality of African academic scholarship, and what the African academy has to offer the world"

Statement Issued by the SABDC Board

Closure of The South African Book Development Council

The South African Book Development Council (SABDC) is one of only two functional book development councils on the African continent. The other is the Ghana Book Development Council. While they share much in common, there is a significant difference between them: Ghana's book development council is fully funded by that country's government, while the SABDC has been in a holding pattern since 2007, waiting to be formalised and funded by the State.

Despite this significant drawback, however, the SABDC's Council, consisting of an impressive cross-section of voluntary national book-sector member associations, has remained committed to increasing access to books in South Africa, and to showcasing, strengthening and diversifying the South African book industry and its many-linked supply chain. The SABDC's groundbreaking and frequently quoted research, conducted in 2006 and 2016, has demonstrated how necessary the sector is to our well-being as South Africans; and how impressive sectoral growth could be if its highly skilled, entrepreneurial and uniquely motivated cultural, nation-building, educational, industrial and commercial sub-sectors were provided with well-informed and aptly focused support.

Starved as it has been of the necessary resources, the SABDC has nevertheless punched well above its weight. Its Council Members and its Board of Directors have served as dedicated volunteers throughout its history. The Council itself got by on a very small complement of dedicated staff, which consisted of only two employees over its first 15 years, with one or two ad-hoc project staff taken on as funds allowed. Despite these severe limitations, the SABDC continued to implement pioneering and innovative work over the years.

Among the seminal efforts driven with dedication and delivered with passion and panache were the Draft National Book Policy; the National Reading Survey; the Draft National Book Development Plan; authoritative and independent fact-based research into the factors influencing the cost of books in South Africa; a revisioned, more inclusive and relevant National Book Fair; and National Book Week, the country's annual reading awareness campaign, which now sits proudly in the State calendar in September every year.

As the years have gone by, it has become increasingly difficult for the SABDC to continue operating. The main reason for this has been that the organisation was never set up to implement ad-hoc projects – or to solicit funds for these on an annual basis. Its modest office and its running costs have never been properly covered, which has meant that a great deal of time has had to be spent on fundraising.

Statement issued by the Board, SABDC, 27 August 2021

Elitha Michelle Van Der Sandt (Member and outgoing CEO)
Nicolette Antoninia Crowster (Chairperson)
Mpuka Eric Radinku (Vice Chairperson)
Isabelle Georgette Delvare (Secretary)
Prof. Sihawukele Emmanuel Ngubane (Member)
Dr Abdool Majid Mahomed (Member)

"it has become increasingly difficult for the SABDC to continue operating. The main reason for this has been that the organisation was never set up to implement ad-hoc projects – or to solicit funds for these on an annual basis"

We believe that a short history of events in more recent years is needed here. In 2009, after launching the SABDC (previously the Print Industries Cluster Council), the then Minister of Arts and Culture, Pallo Jordaan, started the process of setting up a ministerial task team to advise him on the growth and development of the book sector. As the task team started its work there was a cabinet reshuffle, and Paul Mashatile was appointed Minister of Arts and Culture in 2010. It took a while for the task team to start its work under Minister Mashatile, but this was completed in March 2012. After consultations with the book sector, the task team submitted its report – entitled Developing a Growth Strategy for the Book Sector – to Minister Mashatile. The report was accepted by the Minister and the internal process of preparing a Cabinet Memorandum began. Sadly, before this could be submitted, the Minister was replaced by Minister Nathi Mthethwa. It was very difficult to pick up the process after that.

As a result, the SABDC has been operating only through project-based funding for too long. While this type of funding was successfully secured

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Statement Issued by the SABDC Board

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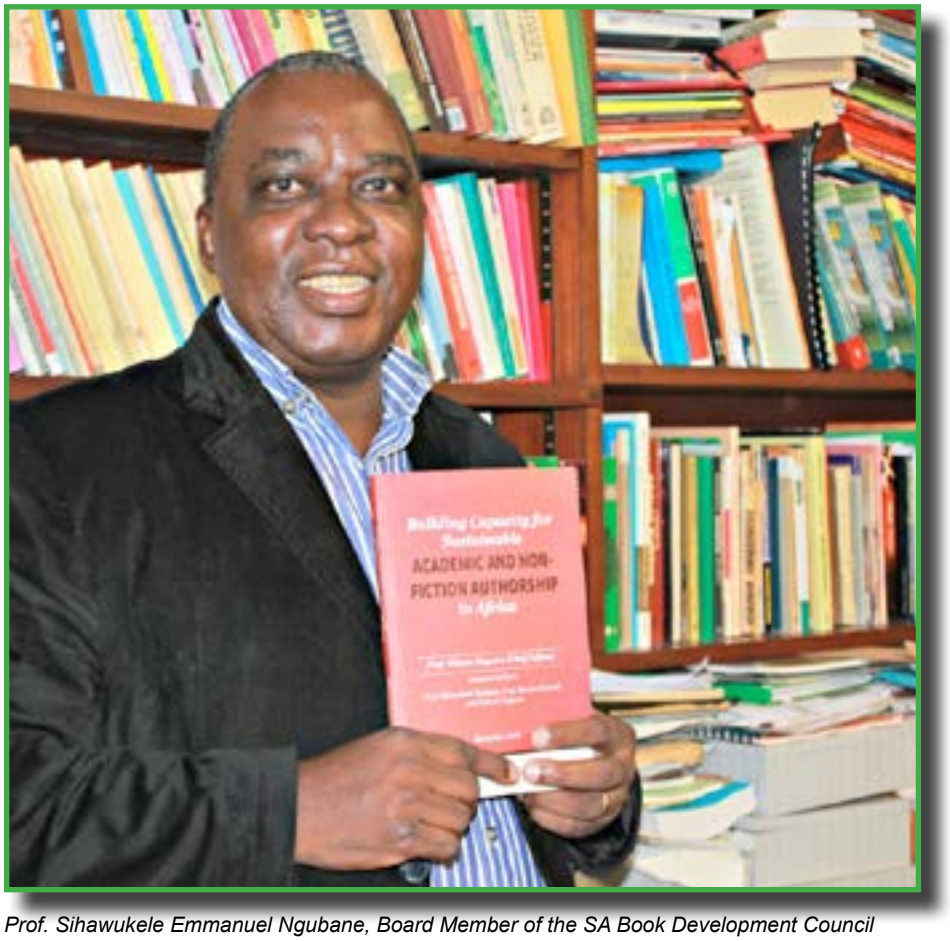
in some years, it could not be assured, either reliably or at all, in other years. In 2020, already hard hit by COVID19, the SABDC implemented National Book Week (NBW) in September, but without being paid any of the funds previously promised by the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC).

Not only was NBW's budget cut by 50%, but the reduced amount was also not forthcoming. At the time, the SABDC was told that the funds had 'disappeared' and were no longer available. The Department nevertheless gave the SABDC verbal assurances that it would find alternative funds for NBW. The delay in funds, however, had devastating effects on the future of the SABDC, which was operating as a fully functional book development council within the habitual context of severely constrained funding described above. It became clear to the Board that the SABDC could not withstand the effects of this non-payment, which would amount to bankruptcy for the Council.

At this point, the SABDC proceeded to serve a notice on Government of its intention to sue the latter in January 2021. Not only was the organisation out of pocket and unable to pay for basic expenses such as rent, but it also owed many service providers for the services they had delivered in September 2020. This was particularly difficult for the SABDC to cope with, not only because it had always operated with the utmost integrity and was acutely aware of the difficult financial conditions its suppliers were labouring under as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, but also because of the inevitable resultant damage to its reputation and the longstanding beneficial relationships it had always relied on to thrive.

The SABDC finally received DSAC's payment for NBW 2020 on 7 April 2021, seven months after the implementation of the reading awareness campaign. By this time its infrastructure was no longer intact, and it was too late to save it. Fortunately, all National Book Week and South African Book Fair service providers were eventually paid the full amounts owing to them.



Prof. Sihawukele Emmanuel Ngubane, Board Member of the SA Book Development Council

We thank the many thousands of patriotic South Africans and the many visitors from other countries who have interacted with, and given to, the SABDC over the past 19 years. We pay tribute to, especially:

- The many, many storytellers, poets, performers, wandering minstrels and edgy young illustrators who shared their own and others' meaning-making and artistry through the SABDC.
- The thousands of schoolchildren from rural and urban areas who came to see and hear them, and to witness the glory of their contributions.
- The provincial libraries and their staff, who made this possible in each province in South Africa.
- The small army of activists who toiled to give all of South Africa's indigenous languages their rightful place in our literature.
- All those who fought to broaden the traditional expectations around attendance at book fairs in South Africa, from the point of view of class, race and gender.
- The writers who told it like it was, and how it should be.
- The publishers, big and small, who hung in there through hard times.
- The many dedicated working groups and Council members for their valuable theoretical and practical contributions.
- Those who were happy to push discussions to their limits around the terrifying social issues we face.
- Those who rejoiced when we rejoiced; and who gave us hope in fulfilling our task of making books important and widely available in South Africa.

We are only too well aware of the gap the SABDC is leaving behind, and of how this will affect the most vulnerable members of our society. This in a period in which our President has been championing reading as a vehicle for improved growth and leadership in South Africa …

Six Lessons In Writing

Reflections On My Writing Journey

Anton M. Pillay*

Writing like any skill gets better with practice. The day will come when you come across some of your forgotten works and get shocked by the high level and quality of the writing. Undeniably, your first impression will be to ask if "I really wrote that?" Writing is a form of art and with time and dedication, real masterpieces will be produced. In this brief essay, I share some of the key lessons I have learnt over the years which have improved my writing.

- The first lesson is that reading is the ammunition for writers. Reading widely and across discipline can help stimulate brain waves. Fiction and non-fiction, the news, blogs, or magazines are all the metaphorical jumper cables which spark the mind into a frenzy. Malcom X once said, "read absolutely everything because you never know where your next idea will come from." Another essential document is the journal article. Journal articles are mini-libraries compressed into 12-18 pages. They can bring the reader up to date with the latest developments on a subject and showcase the different frames of thought on the particular subject. As a child sees hundreds of options when gazing at the playground, so does the researcher when reading a journal article.
- A second lesson is how to overcome writer's block. As Joseph Keller once remarked, "every writer I know has trouble writing." One way to overcome this is to borrow from Nike's famous logo, "*just do it*". Put pen to paper or hands to keyboard and just write away. Ignore the spelling mistakes, grammatical errors, and intended audience. Once all your thoughts are written down, one can then return to brush up the language and hone the argument. The legendary Ernest Hemingway once said "there is no rule on how to write. Sometimes it comes easily and perfectly, sometimes it's like drilling rock and then blasting it out with charges."
- A third lesson is to get feedback on your finished product. Identify one or two close colleagues or mentors who you know can provide timely feedback. The critical feedback provided can help improve writing and pick-up typos previously missed. Sending the finished work out also gives the writer a mental break which allows for new thoughts to arise while one awaits feedback.
- A fourth lesson is a technique. Say you have finished your *magnus opus* and want to give it a final read through. Instead of reading every paragraph, and making corrections as you read, rather start the paragraph anew. In re-writing each paragraph, your sentences will be stronger through rephrasing and better word choice. This technique can also help to remove overladen sentences and fix grammatical errors.
- A fifth lesson is not to leave your documents open for too long. Produce and send to prevent procrastination. Sometimes people will reject your writing and sometimes they will adore it. Do not let the rejections disappoint you too much.
- A sixth and final lesson is to do what Steve Biko said; "write what you like." Write what makes you happy. Write about what troubles you. Write for clarity and relaxation. Write to enjoy. As Richard Bach noted, "a professional writer is an amateur who didn't quit."

In sum, these six lessons can help improve your writing.

* Anton M. Pillay is affiliated with the South African Research Chair: African Diplomacy & Foreign Policy (University of Johannesburg) and the Vaal University of Technology

"The first lesson is that reading is the ammunition for writers. Reading widely and across discipline can help stimulate brain waves"

Some Observations On Research

The Virtuous Cycle Of Research; Design, Experimentation, And Communication

Samson A. Oyeyinka and Adewumi T. Oyeyinka

The journey of publishing research findings either as an article, a book chapter or a conference paper begins from problem identification followed by effective and efficient planning and strategies which culminates into the final paper. The entire process could be a virtuous cycle, with a favourable outcome or result or a vicious circle with negative feedbacks. While the design, experimentation (data collection/ acquisition) and communicating the research findings is a herculean task and requires a great deal of coordination and teamwork, it is possible to get this done with ease when proper planning and attention to details are impregnated into the cycle. This piece will share some of the exciting and unpleasant moments in our career journey and how we and our colleagues were able to overcome some of the challenges faced during our research work. An interesting paper[1] that may help convince an editor to accept your paper quickly may be consulted in addition to highlights raised in this paper. We believe that this piece will be handy for undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students as well as emerging researchers.

The first point to note is that the **design of experiment must be apt and very good** otherwise the overall quality of the findings will be faulty. In food science and technology discipline, we believe that if the raw material used for processing is of inferior quality, no matter the process control done during processing, the product can never be of an acceptable quality. The same is true for publication. 'Get it right from the get-go'. The novelty of your work must be clearly stated. During data collection (experimentation), do not discard any data. Preliminary data may be the life-saving data for you. My first publication[2] as a PhD student (Samson Oyeyinka) was from a preliminary work. Although this was not part of the initial objectives, my supervisor eventually added it as part of the research objectives and that boosted my research outputs. The last part which is communicating your research findings is also a major challenge. Your design may be good and data collection effective, if you do not know how well to package your findings, it ends up being rejected. As a rule, we have adopted the following strategies and has worked for us. Use a captivating title, clearly state your objectives, have a good summary (abstract). Most editors read your abstract and decide about the acceptance or rejection of your work. It must highlight the most important findings and uniqueness of your research. Do not keep data for too long. Someone else may be doing the same research while you keep yours. In submitting your findings, read the journal guide to be sure your research fits into the scope of the journal. Try a high impact factor journal first before you go low. You may be lucky to get it accepted or reviewed and rejected. The feedback from the review helps to improve the manuscript. Never get sad for rejection. Lastly, engage in collaborative research. This has helped us a great deal. To increase your outputs, get involved in other people's research. As an example, if two people co-authored five papers a year, each of them will have 10 papers at the end of one year which is greater than if each one had focused on five papers independently (Synergy). It has worked for us; it is still working for people, and it will work for you.

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"To increase your outputs, get involved in other people's research"

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