



THE ACADEMIC BOOK OF THE FUTURE

Communities of Practice in the Humanities

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Arts & Humanities
Research Council



Context of Project

- AHRC/British Library collaboration
- Focus on the Humanities
- Call launched Feb 2014
- Project team formed: Samantha Rayner and Nick Canty from UCL, Simon Tanner and Marilyn Deegan from King's College, London
- RIN as key consultant
- Award news released Aug 2014
- Project begins Oct 2014
- Scope: UK – but wider



Context of Project

Monographs, collections of essays and critical editions are the cornerstone of scholarship in the humanities, and the careers of many rest on the production of books. But they are uneconomic to produce.

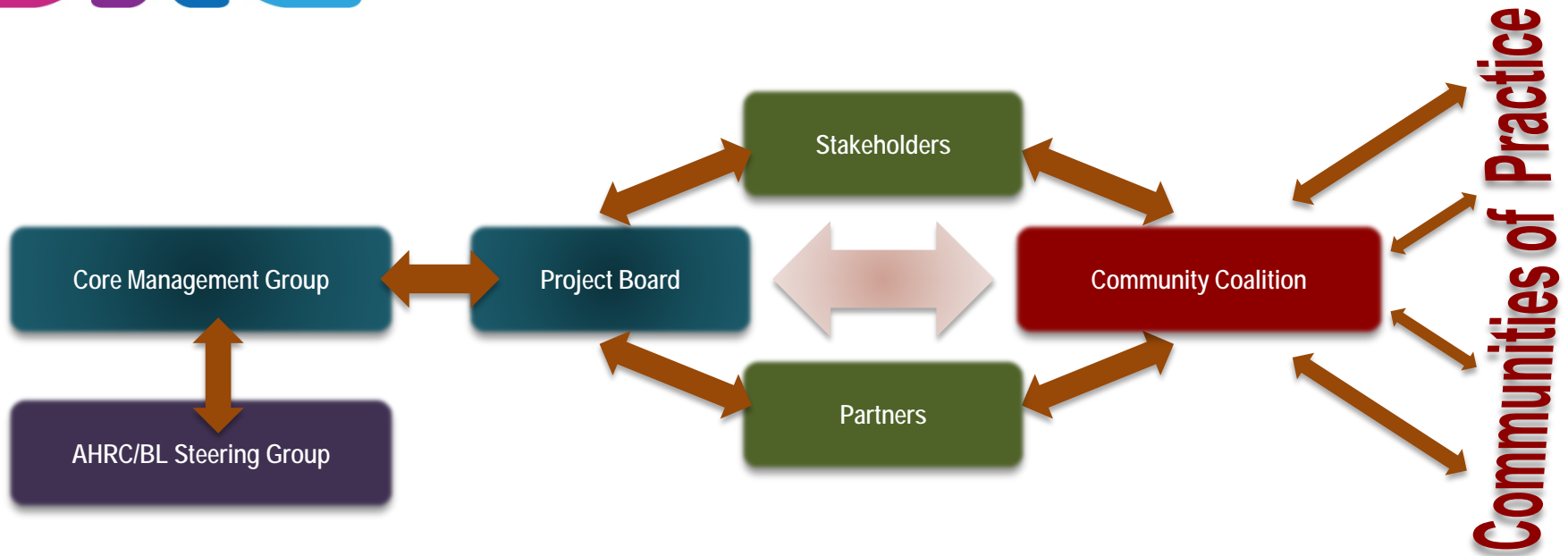
How, in this new world, is the academic of now and the near future to write and circulate their work?

How are publishers to respond to the new challenges?

How are libraries to curate, preserve, and disseminate the diverse forms and formats coming their way?



Organisation



Project Board Chair:

Professor Kathryn Sutherland

(Professor of Bibliography and Textual Criticism, Oxford University)



AHRC Press Release

19th August 2014

“It is expected that this project will have a significant impact on a wide range of stakeholders in research, library and publishing communities and generate new evidence and dialogue that will inform policy and national approaches to this important area of scholarly communications.”

<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/News-and-Events/News/Pages/The-Academic-Book-of-the-Future-Announced.aspx>



Our Starting Point

“What do scholars want?” Whether we work with digital or paper-based resources, or both, our basic needs are the same. We all want our cultural record to be comprehensive, stable, and accessible. And we all want to be able to augment that record with our own contributions.”

Jerome McGann, *Sustainability: the Elephant in the Room*. Paper for the 2010 Conference, Digital Humanities Scholarship: The Shape of Things to Come, University of Virginia.



Core Aims and Objectives

- **To examine the roles and purposes of academic books to serve scholarship and wider learning**
- **To examine and analyse the dynamics of academic book production, curation, and use**
- **To investigate and assess the opportunities and challenges associated with technological developments**

(via 2 phases of activity)



Some Questions and Topics

- ❖ Academic? Book? Future?
- ❖ Peer Review
- ❖ What could a digital academic book do?
- ❖ Open Access
- ❖ Crossover books
- ❖ Scholarly Editing
- ❖ Preservation and Access
- ❖ University Presses and Academic Presses
- ❖ Selling and marketing academic books
- ❖ Academic books in the developing world
- ❖ Accessibility
- ❖ Ethics of academic publishing
- ❖ Disciplinary differences



The Crossick Report:

“The book has a special place in the culture of research publication”

“Works of iconic importance have reshaped a field and resonated for decades”

“in a very real sense, the book is a part of the author’s identity”

“Monographs play an important and diverse role in shaping the careers of academics in many disciplines”

“It is felt by many that today’s scholars lack the time to read books thoroughly, and it is feared that the academic skill of ‘deep reading’ may become, or have already become, devalued or lost.”



Crossick on Book Formats

*Monographs are a vitally important and distinctive vehicle for research communication, and must be sustained in any moves to open access. **The availability of printed books alongside the open-access versions will be essential.***

“There are material characteristics associated with the printed book, its layout, design and non-verbal content that often make it significantly more than the text alone, and these characteristics are part of its ability to communicate and shape what it is that is communicated.” p33

“We know that print books last for a century or more, but there are significant doubts about whether the same can be said for ebooks.” p42



Crossick on Open Access 1

“This study does not conclude that the rise of open access models and operations will have a negative effect on the publishing landscape.” p64

“The study makes a more general point about open access, though, which is that open access to some (but not all) literature is likely to drive attention to publications on grounds of availability and not necessarily that of quality.” p64

“what incentives are in place for vendors, publishers and others to promote open access works to their potential audiences?” p 40



Crossick on Open Access 2

“The need for credibility presents a challenge for open access, requiring either that publishers of all kinds engage seriously with open access or that the academic community changes the way in which it obtains signs of quality.” p37.

“If open access is policy-driven, publishers must also interpret funder and institutional policies and adapt to them to ensure they are producing ‘compliant’ books, requirements which will add a further layer of complexity to their workflow.” p 40.

“There is no clear agreement, either within or between stakeholder groups, on how to define open access, in terms of either its desired aim or its non-negotiable minimum.” p46



“ It is essential that the arts, humanities and social science community takes a lead in **shaping thinking** about these issues to ensure that the models that emerge sustain and improve the communication of scholarly information rather than distorting it.”



**Planned Activity: Phase 1
Investigation & evidence gathering
Jan – Sept 2015**

- **How do different stakeholders perceive the purposes that academic books fulfill, and the effectiveness of different formats in fulfilling them?**
- **How are the research and other processes through which books are created, produced, disseminated, used and received changing, and what are the implications of those changes?**
- **What are the potential implications of these changes for the assessment of the quality of research, for peer review, and for promotion and career progression?**



- **Confirm small research projects, events, expert seminars and workshops**
 - **Focus groups with stakeholders**
 - **Seminars**
 - **Meeting with potential partners**
- **All: collect data, compile Phase 1 report for presentation at Board meetings in Sept**



Planned Activity: Phase 2
Oct 2015 – Sept 2016

- **Structured data gathering, based on Phase 1 focus groups: RIN – UK wide, all stakeholder groups**
- **Core team plus Advisory Board and Community Coalition: facilitate additional research from Community members, run further events and workshops – responsive to developments in Phase 1**
- **Academic Book Week – Nov 9-16th, 2015**
- **All: collect data, compile final report for AHRC**



Academic Book Week: Nov 9-16th

- **Booksellers, Academic Libraries, Publishers, Researchers, Learned Societies, Funders, General Public**
- **Backed by Booksellers Association and UK Publishers Association**
- **Week-long showcase of academic book excellence**
- **Eg: book readings/ workshops/ seminars; library tours; special exhibitions and displays; promotions in bookshops and via publishers; ‘gown and town’ events; social media competitions; media articles; online webinars and discussions**



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<https://academicbookfuture.wordpress.com/>



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