

*By the Book8 at the
University of Porto*



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BY THE BOOK8 CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS: KEY ISSUES IN THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

The conference *By the Book8*, focused on “Publishing and the Changing World”, organised by the European Publishing Studies Association (Euro-Pub), was held this year at Arts and Humanities Faculty, University of Porto, in Portugal, on 21st and 22nd June. The conference promoted the exchange of knowledge and ideas between industry professionals, educators and scholars, approaching relevant issues to the contemporary book trade and to the publishing industry in general.

In order to offer a diverse and personalised experience to the attendees, the conference adopted the format of multiple parallel sessions, providing a wide variety of topics and approaches.

OPENING AND WELCOME

The conference was initiated by the members of the organization committee, who then gave Andre Breedt the space for presenting his work to the audience. By talking about book markets and trends driving global book markets, he focused on the Nielsen Book Scan, which tracks point-of-sale print book purchases. For his presentation he chose to analyse numbers of best sellers in some markets, TikTok books, selected trends and so much more topics of everyone’s interest.



HIGHLIGHTS OF PARALLEL SESSIONS

The session on **Bibliodiversity** was led by Eben Muse, during which Cat Mitchell, from University of Derby, explored the role of sensitivity readers in the publishing industry, especially in relation to disability. In the second lecture, Sophie Noël, from Université Paris Panthéon-Assas, presented her study of independent bookshops in France and Britain. She highlighted the unique role of independent bookshops in the book industry, emphasising that they offer a personalised experience and a welcoming environment, unlike online platforms and large bookshops chains.

These two presentations approached relevant issues in the context of the publishing industry, including (i) the representation of marginalised voices and (ii) the importance of independent bookshops as distinct cultural spaces.

At the same time, Samantha Miller and Fleur Praal, led by Jaka Gercar, showed the best of their research to those who had an interest in the topic **Institutional change: Publishing research and education**.

Samantha Miller, from the University of Pretoria, talked about her experience in *Conducting research in a minority language*, Afrikaans, the political issues, limitations and joys. After presenting some facts about this language, she mentioned the challenges she faced as political affiliation, limited resources or even extra work. She finished by giving a solution and suggestion: create sources!

After that, it was time for Fleur Praal, from Leiden University, to present her point of view on *Structured debate as a teaching method in Publishing Studies courses*. She started by defining debate as strategized communication event with a semi-structured form and by explaining why it is used in classrooms.

In the session moderated by Anna Muenchrath on **Feminist Politics and the Book Industry**, the role of independent publishers in South Africa was

discussed. Beth Le Roux, from University of Pretoria, presented her study entitled *Independent women publishers in South Africa*. The speaker emphasised the importance of overcoming systemic problems, and highlighted the need for joint action to ensure the support and growth of independent publishers, thus promoting diversity in the publishing field and access to works by marginalised writers.

In the other room the topic **Distribution of ebooks and audiobooks** was discussed by Maciej Liguzinski and Joana De Conti, moderated by Christoph Blasi.

Maciej Liguzinski, P.h.d. researcher, from Oslo Metropolitan University, explored the *Contentions and compromises, Scandinavian publishers' perception of e-lending in public libraries*. By using a qualitative, comparative approach, he compared some opinions about public libraries. His preliminary conclusion was that the technical and business lending friction combined with a direct relation between publishers and libraries is necessary to establish a compromise.

Then, Joana De Conti talked about Brazilian reading numbers, as a large area with almost no books and consequently no publishers. She also presented the 4 phases of distribution flow: production – where you have to let the reader choose – distribution – in which Metadata is fundamental – marketing – where you have to create a connection with readers – analytics – which is important to keep data over time to compare and strategize.

In the session entitled **Publishing Paradigms: Exploring Independent and Historical Shifts**, chaired by David Piovesan, there were two lectures. The first was presented by Jana Klingenberg. She discussed the relationship between african culture and publishing, using the publishing house Nasionale Pers (whose name was later changed to Naspers) as an example. The speaker highlighted the importance of Nasionale Pers/Naspers as an influential South African publishing house throughout its history. In the second lecture, Anna Kiernan approached independent publishing in a post-digital world and how creative digital marketing campaigns offered promotional opportunities for limited edition publications. During the talk, the case studies of two publishers were mentioned – Persephone Books and Galley Beggar –, who were taking advantage of online marketing to promote their books and to connect with a wider audience.

In the parallel session conducted by David Barker, Agata Mrva-Montoya and Anna Cappellotto & Raffaele Cioffi presented their perspectives and studies about **Advancing inclusivity and accessibility in publishing**.

Agata Mrva-Montoya, from the University of Sydney, started by defining Accessible publishing, Inclusive publishing and “Born-accessible” digital publication. Then she mentioned different approaches like the particularist, the universalist, from marker to user-centred and from reactive to proactive. She also talked about the stakeholder model of accessibility and internal stakeholders.

Then, Anna Cappellotto & Raffaele Cioffi discussed *Diversity, inclusivity and accessibility in digital scholarly editing*. The reader as user and coworker and a special case of inclusive editing: the social edition, were some of the questions debated that made them conclude that Web accessibility and inclusivity are crucial topics for Web and digital world.

In the session entitled **Editorial Futures and Open Access: Dynamics & Collaboration**, opened by Caroline Wintersgrill, the future of publishing and open access was discussed, approaching the dynamics and collaboration in the publishing industry. The first presentation was given by Katerine Day and Jocelyn Hargrave, from University of Melbourne and the University of Derby, respectively. They discussed the changes in publishing practices in the 21st century due to digital transformations. The second presentation was given by Christoph Bläsi and Anna Klamet from Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz and the University of the Arts London, respectively. They discussed the importance of transparency in open access publishing. During their dynamic presentation, the speakers approached the challenges faced by young researchers, such as the complexity of copyright. In this regard, they presented the AuROA project as a solution to some of these obstacles. Furthermore, the results obtained by the AuROA project could bring significant benefits to publishers, helping to legitimise their role in academic publishing value chains.



Simultaneously, Beth Le Roux was the chair in a session about **Resources of authorial identity building** where Frania Hall and Madeleine Span showed their contribution to the discussion of the topic.

Frانيا Hall presentation, from the University of the Arts London, was about digital ecosystems in book publishing. She talked over about digital transforma-

tions such as self-publishers being able to buy in services and agents publishing their own works. Then she presented theoretical themes such as ecosystems of creativity and for that, she added 4 examples: Amazon, Wattpad, Academic ecosystem and Ed tech, describing each one of them.

Madeleine Span, from the University of Applied Arts Vienna, had her presentation about *The economics of self-publishing*. She explained to the audience that the characteristics of the project were analysing concepts of contemporary self-publishing authorship having an empirical qualitative study (framework analysis).

The last session of the day was also the most requested by the audience. Gisèle Sapiro from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, France, drew everyone's attention by talking about the transformation of the publishing field in the era of late capitalism. Even though she could not be physically present and gave an online presentation, the public were captivated all the time. This discussion had as a topic the structure of the publishing field: large-scale production – “commercial books”, best-sellers, entertainment; and small-scale production – upmarket, literary upmarket, serious books. She also focused on the growing domination of English in translation flows and the role of literature festivals in the building of networks.

In the first parallel session of the second day of the conference, Jaka Gerčar and Helge Ronning & Tore Slaatta presented their studies based on the topic of **Politics of the book industry**. The moderator of this session was Katherine Day.

First, Jaka Gerčar from the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, talked about the *Book's impact between national and international markets*. For his study, he used some indicators: Sales – imperfect data; Loans: national variations; Prizes- quality over quantity; Translation: market size issues; Media presence: traditional and user-generated content. He also mentioned some famous people with incredible numbers of translations, such as Drago Jancar.

Then, Helge Ronning & Tore Slaatta presented a work about the new Norwegian Book Law – European Event. Starting by defining book law – a combination of juridical and economic measures – they highlighted the weak elements of Norwegian law: structure, aims and definitions, inclusion/exclusion of book types and the fixed price. They admitted that booksellers, authors and publishers are in favour of the law.

Simultaneously, the parallel session **Bookshops: Strategies for Success and Revitalization**, moderated by Sophie Noël, brought together industry professionals and academics interested in exploring strategies to meet the challenges facing bookshops in the current scenario. In the first presentation, Eben Muse, from Prifysgol Bangor University, described how the bookshop business model has evolved significantly over the last century. In the second presentation, David

Piovesan, from Magellan Laboratory at Université Lyon, highlighted the challenges faced by bookshops due to the growth of online sales and the changing role of the agents involved.

In the session **Book Fairs and Cultural Representation**, moderated by Paulo Faustino, there were two presentations: *Spilling creativity. Books fairs and spanish cultural diplomacy*, by Fernando García Naharro, from Universidad Complutense de Madrid; and *Guest of honors or guest of horrors: what works in GOH programs*, conducted by Mihael Kovač, from University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. These presentations explored Spain's presence as Guest of Honour at book fairs around the world, and investigated the objectives and benefits of Guest of Honour programmes at the renowned Frankfurt Book Fair.

The topic **Politics of the Digitizing Book Industry** brought to light the transformation of the book industry with the digital revolution and its impact on readers' consumption habits.

Agata Mrva-Montoya led the session, while researcher David Barker, from University of Derby, presented his findings present in the paper *Exploring, the co-existence of print and digital, scholarly and trade content*, on the co-existence of print and digital formats. As the book industry continues to evolve, the research of Barker and other experts provides valuable insight into the policies and practices needed to ensure a prosperous future for the industry.

In this lecture, Agnieszka Fluda-Krokos, from Jagiellonian University (Poland), and Sara Tanderup Linkis, from Lund University (Sweden), presented their point of view to the audience.

The session moderated by Tore Slaatta had the contribution of Sara Karrholm and Lore De Greve to the topic **Intersections of creativity and literary controversies**.

Sara Kärholm from Lund University talked about Swedish crime fiction as a product for export, giving as an example the export award that the Swedish government has created for cultural and creative industries. She used as method: ethnographic field studies and netnographic analysis of crime writers accounts in social media. A question posed to the material was: Which social networks are viewed as most important? The conclusion was that there is a high degree of competition in the field but is also common to have cooperations and express support between writers and social networking.

After this presentation, Lore De Greve from Ghent University presented *So much for literary democracy: Journalistic Capital and the Purpose of Scandal Surrounding Literary Prizes on social media*. In her work, she mentioned Bourdieu and types of capital to give context to the topic. She also focused on the Not the Booker prize from The Guardian and affirmed that winning a prize contributes to the increase in books sales.



Also interesting was the conference session on **New Technology and the Book Industry**, moderated by Fleur Praal. The speaker Anna Muenchrath, from Florida Institute of Technology, focused on algorithms and their influence on translations, raising political and ethical issues. The second presentation, *Coding the printed page: a year on*, was presented by Oswin Tickler, from University of the Arts London, who explored the potential of creativity in print, with an emphasis on the use of software and discussions on artificial intelligence.

The last parallel session, led by Frania Hall had the presence of Kamila Augustyn, Maciej Liguzinski and Samantha Miller to discuss **Innovative models of cooperation and expansion**.

Kamila Augustyn and Maciej Liguziński explored *Polish public libraries' e-lending cooperation with a commercial aggregator Legimi*. In this presentation, they mentioned streaming services landscape in Poland and the reasons why Polish public libraries decide to cooperate with commercial actors. They also explained the advantages of forming a consortium, such as financial, administrative, image and statutory and technical. The research limitation they found was the lack of systematic data on public access.

Then, Samantha Miller explored another topic, *Afrikaans literature beyond borders: Exploring a co-competition business strategy*. In her research she raised a problem: considering it is a minority language, how do you build or expand a market? The solution was to investigate business strategies of small independent trade publishers. She defined co-competition as two business partners, who usually are competing that collaborate to reach a specific goal. This concept is important to increasing the existent market; improving the competitive position; creating new markets and applying resources effectively.

Louisa Preston, Rita Faire, Caroline Wintersgill & Alastair Horne, from the University of Stirling, were the last researchers to give their perspectives about

Creative and Practice-Based Approaches to Research and Education within Publishing Studies. This last session was led by Jocelyn Hargrave.

They conducted research into learning and teaching in publishing studies – what are the priorities, challenges and opportunities for publishing education. They raised the question: how can we encourage students to explore innovation and creative opportunities for their future profession practice/research? It was affirmed that students are very interested in collaborating on projects that evolve practical work. To motivate students, there should be done more small research projects.

Anne Mangen from the University of Stavanger, Norway, finished the session moderated by Mihael Kovač and discussed *Reading and digitisation: theoretical considerations and empirical research*. Anne did 76 comparisons between paper-based and screen-based reading comprehension (of single text reading, no hyperlinks or interactivity). She found that the overall medium effect indicated better reading outcomes for paper-based reading for informational texts. She finished by talking about the need for more interdisciplinarity and multi-method paradigms, digitisation and sustained attention, understanding reading warrants multi-method paradigms.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

By the Book 8 conference was an enriching event that provided important discussions, conversations, exchanges of ideas, exchanges of opinions and reflections on the present and on the future of the publishing industry. With its diverse content and propitious for the exchange of ideas, the conference provided learning moments and the exchange of knowledge, helping participants to adapt to the transformations in the sector and to explore new approaches to the production and consumption of books.

