Participants*

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The most crucial participants in the system of scholarly publication in art history are scholars, university presses, libraries, museums, and readers. This section introduces their various and overlapping roles, interests, and concerns; Lawrence T. McGill's report *The State of Scholarly Publishing in the History of Art and Architecture*[1] contains fuller accounts of our private conversations and group discussions involving junior and senior scholars, publishers, and representatives of libraries and museums.

1 Junior and Senior Scholars

As the main producers and readers of art historical publications, scholars identified numerous concerns in the course of our study. Junior scholars (defined as untenured or recently tenured faculty) and senior scholars (defined as scholars who have had tenure in leading research institutions for some time) share these interests to different degrees.

Scholars consulted in our study focused on the following concerns.

1. Tensions between the requirements of scholarship and the requirements of publishers.
2. The relative values of different genres of scholarly publication, both with respect to advancing the field and with respect to tenure and promotion.
3. The costs of publication in the field of art and architectural history.
4. Understanding the challenges facing "art history publishing" in comprehensive terms and finding solutions, including more effective ways of mobilizing and accessing digital resources.

Ad 1 (list, item 1, p. 1). Scholars, particularly at the junior level, detail experiences and perceptions that academic press editors, in seeking to broaden the appeal of their titles in trans- or interdisciplinary ways, ask for shorter manuscripts and changes that may affect the scholarly contribution in undesirable ways without necessarily becoming more marketable. Junior scholars also express concerns about a lack of transparency in the process of obtaining a contract and of the functions of peer review. Senior scholars are concerned that peer review is rarely followed up effectively and that it has something of a rubber-stamp function.

Ad 2 (list, item 2, p. 1). Senior as well as junior scholars note that Ph.D. dissertations, formerly one of the major sources of monographs, have less of a chance of getting published by university presses without serious revisions of the kind described above. Some senior scholars remark, however, that dissertations are now so narrowly focused that many would not make for very good books, and some try to steer their students' dissertations in such a way that the product is effectively a book-length argument rather than an accumulation of data. All the same, scholars noted that the production and dissemination of such dissertation

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†http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/
[1] *The State of Scholarly Publishing in the History of Art and Architecture* <http://cnx.org/content/col10377/latest/>

data remains vital to the health of the discipline. Scholars at all levels would like to ensure that the full range of dissertation research is disseminated effectively in monographic as well as other forms.

Given an apparent retrenchment in monograph publication, scholars generally wish for promotion and tenure committees to acknowledge that other genres of art historical publication may make equally distinguished and transformative contributions to the discipline. Some emerging fields appear to have fewer monograph publication opportunities available to them, and they may be driven more strongly by exhibitions or articles. Many scholars bemoan the relative devaluation in the credentialing process of the peer-reviewed article, noting its timely, cutting-edge, and thoroughly vetted character. Senior scholars recall that a series of such articles in the past constituted grounds for tenure and promotion, and that they may nurture the discipline in ways that are as essential as longer monographs. They recommend a revaluation of the scholarly article based on a dissertation chapter. Scholars also note that museum publications inherently command the larger audiences so sought after by presses.

Ad 3 (list, item 3, p. 1). Scholars across the board are shouldering increasing costs associated with publishing monographs and journal articles. These costs are almost exclusively due to the illustration programs required in art history publication. As editors confirm, scholars bear the lion's share of the costs of image acquisitions and reproduction permission fees. Assuming a modest average of $25 per black-and-white illustration, a book with 100 figures would cost the author $2,500. Most illustration programs easily double that figure, as discussed in Part II[2] of this report.

Color plates tend to command higher permission fees, and their production is significantly more costly to publishers. Scholars are often asked to contribute subventions for color illustrations, and sometimes for larger-than-average image programs. Subventions for illustrations are frequently sought from the scholars' home institutions, professional organizations, foundations, and private philanthropists. Scholars would welcome a clear guide to such opportunities.

Apart from direct costs, scholars incur opportunity costs in the time-consuming navigation of the image and permission request system. They find the complexities of copyright law opaque and the request process cumbersome, and wish for a more streamlined procedure across institutions owning works of art, photographs of works of art, and copyrights. Part II[3] of this report addresses these questions more fully.

Ad 4 (list, item 4, p. 1). Senior scholars consulted throughout the study suggested that university and foundation leaders address the challenges facing art history publication in a systemic manner. They acknowledged that a simple recommitment to the scholarly monograph or increase in subventions will not yield long-term solutions that will sustain the discipline and ensure the professional advancement of their students. Scholars note that a comprehensive approach should allow for the continued publication of the kinds of knowledge the monograph has traditionally produced: the book-length argument as well as the detailed reconstitution of art historical objects of study by archival, archaeological, connoisseurial, and iconographic techniques. There is widespread recognition that not all of this work needs to appear in the traditional form of the university press monograph.

Scholars are generally open to the potential of electronic publishing and of print publications with electronic additions, seeing such dissemination primarily as a way to circumvent the high costs and image-program limitations associated with print publication. While many scholars express reservations about the stability and prestige of the digital medium and about escalation of the image quality and copyright problems, others find that current electronic publications do not leverage sufficiently the dynamic and dialogic potential of the digital space. Further thoughts about these transitional challenges and the special potential of electronic publication for art history are presented in Part III[4] of this report.

2 University Presses

The mission of North American university presses has traditionally been one of furthering scholarship at large, without direct regard for the particular work produced in the universities that bear their name. Those

[2] "The Image Economy: Introduction" <http://cnx.org/content/m13930/latest/>
[3] "The Image Economy: Introduction" <http://cnx.org/content/m13930/latest/>
[4] "Electronic Publication: Introduction" <http://cnx.org/content/m13928/latest/>

universities supported their presses because of the intellectual and scholarly prestige associated with their publications. In the humanities, the presses have long focused on publishing peer-reviewed monographs; over time, the monograph has become the primary criterion for tenure and promotion in North American universities and colleges. University press editors expressed concerns that this development has put academic review decisions too squarely in their court.

In recent years, university press monograph publication rates in art history have not quite kept pace with the growth of the professional community of art historians (see Trends[5]). Several challenges to presses have made vigorous front lists of traditional, discipline-based monographs in art and architectural history less feasible now than they were a decade ago:

1. Disciplinary diversification and the interdisciplinary turn in higher education have made cross-over books a commissioning priority for editors;
2. Steep declines in library sales, due mostly to increases in the costs of science journals, have made traditional print runs of 1000 and higher unrealistic for most books; such print runs are nevertheless maintained because of economies of scale in the printing process, and thus yield costly inventories;
3. Growth in the publication of attractive, full-color, synthesizing art books has reduced the general readership that was an additional source of sales in the past;
4. Production costs have risen because of the increasingly onerous permissions regime and heightened production-value expectations on the part of authors and readers; and
5. University administrations have begun to require that presses be more self-sufficient, and now frequently require revenues to be turned back in part to the parent institution.

Publishers and editors are well aware that current business models for art history publishing need to be revised, and they recognize new possibilities in born-digital publication and print-on-demand distribution. Nonetheless, many are also skeptical about the viability of these new channels of art history publication in the short term.

As universities have begun to restructure their relationships to their presses, either by bringing them into the university library structure or requiring them to operate on a semi-profitable business model, the role of university presses has become less clear. Discussions with publishers and editors suggest that a concerted effort to clarify the functions and operating models of university presses would be timely.

3 Libraries

Research libraries play an important role in the scholarly publishing environment in that they represent a significant portion of the market for scholarly monographs.[6] Thus changes in library funding, organization, or activities can greatly affect the field of scholarly publishing. For this reason the current status and future directions of libraries were also considered in our study.

Although more and more publications are offered in digital form, libraries continue to acquire significant collections in print. Nevertheless, library budgets are increasingly stretched because of the very high cost of scientific journals and the concomitant need to cut back on other purchases—often print monographs. Libraries have to balance the continued acquisition of print materials with the need to acquire ever-growing numbers of electronic resources. Libraries are also devoting significant resources to preservation and long-term access of digital collections, and they are taking an increasingly active role in the management of and advising on copyright and intellectual property issues. And finally, librarians have developed extensive expertise in the areas of discovery and access to digital information resources, and are providing diversified services to scholars and students in searching across multiple databases and publications. A number of publishers consult with librarians concerning the design and functionality of their digital resources so as to make sure that they conform to the ways in which users are accustomed to finding and accessing information.

Libraries seek to acquire digital resources that will serve the needs of a wide range of users. Despite the budgetary constraints that they face, they remain committed to acquiring as many print monographs

[5] "Trends" <http://cnx.org/content/m13966/latest/>

[6] This subsection of the report was drafted by Kate Wittenberg.

as possible. They do not wish to purchase resources twice—that is, if they already have them in one form they do not wish to purchase them a second time in another format or bundled with other content. Such policies depress the appetite of libraries for books that are explicitly based on dissertations if, as is usually the case, dissertations are already available in print or electronic forms. Well aware of the declining sales potential of dissertation-based monographs, some standard book distributors deliberately exclude them from their offerings, and editors are cautious to accept such manuscripts.[7]

Libraries generally welcome innovative products that represent new forms of scholarship and presentation, however, and prefer pricing and access models that allow them to make resources easily available to their patrons whether they are working on campus, from home, or in the field. This preference creates a strong potential market for electronic publication in art history.

4 Museums

Museums are major publishers of art historical scholarship, primarily through the genres of the collection catalogue, the exhibition publication, and the museum-based journal. The most active area of publication is centered on exhibitions, which typically yield catalogues of the kind described under Genres of Scholarly Publication[8]. Other exhibition publications include books of essays with a summary checklist, special issues of museum journals, and edited volumes or online postings of papers based on exhibition symposia.

A significant development in museum publications over the past decade has been their outsourcing to university presses. The arrangement is mutually beneficial. To the university press, a publication done in partnership with a museum guarantees advance book sales and thus profitability. It also offers the press the superior marketing and visibility that comes with participation in significant exhibitions, and it allows the press to expand its list without significant additional editorial investment. Several museums have research centers attached to them, and the relationship to such museums gives presses privileged access to the authors associated with them.[9] To museums, managing elaborate editorial and book production departments is financially onerous; outsourcing some (though never all) of these functions to presses with expertise in art book production relieves some of these pressures. University presses with significant marketing reach also extend the sales life of the exhibition-bound publication.

Respondents to our survey of university press editors reported that 24.5 percent of the art history books published by their presses over the past three years were exhibition catalogues and another five percent were museum-related titles of other kinds. Yale University Press has been particularly successful in developing partnerships with museums (and research centers linked to them). Other publishers, such as Princeton University Press and University of Washington Press, are using this collaborative publication model effectively as well. There is a perception that these museum-related publications may have taken the place of single-author monographs in the total number of art history books published, but our study did not find evidence to support this view. While the absolute number of museum-related works published by the eight leading university presses has increased over time, from about seven per year between 1985 and 1989 to about 19 per year between 2000 and 2004 (driven almost entirely by Yale), museum-related titles account for about the same percentage of all art history titles published today (nine percent) as they did in the late 1980s (seven percent). The absolute growth in museum publications represents a welcome increase in the opportunities for publishing art historical scholarship, even if the genre would benefit from scholarly enhancement.

[7] A university press director informed us that some university libraries have instructed book wholesalers to scan the acknowledgments and front matter of books to identify those that originated in dissertations and to exclude them from their book approval plans. Yankee Book Peddler, one of the major wholesalers, reportedly estimated that 40 percent of titles are cut from approval plans for this reason.

[8] "Genres of Scholarly Publication" <http://cnx.org/content/m13921/latest/>

[9] More than fifteen museums in North America now have such research centers associated with them; see the website of the Association of Research Institutes in Art History at http://www.ariah.info/ (<http://www.ariah.info/>).

5 Readers

Compared to most humanities, art history enjoys a large readership of professional art historians, intellectuals in adjacent fields, students (art history courses remain popular on North American campuses), and a large and growing public of museum visitors and cultural tourists. Authors as well as readers have a stake in the widest and lowest-cost distribution of scholarship in its monographic as well as its synthetic and survey forms. The broadest readership is currently well served by the publication system when it comes to surveys and exhibition publications, although price often constitutes a barrier. The monographs needed by the smaller subset of disciplinary experts have become scarcer because of the linked phenomena of decreasing library sales, declining publication of new monographs, smaller print runs, increasing costs-per-copy, and rising prices.[10] Electronic reader fulfillment services, either by print-on-demand or direct digital delivery of books or single chapters within them, thus far remain underdeveloped for art history.

Scholarly publication in art history has yet to find ways of reaching and addressing a rapidly growing online readership. Readers of all generations, but especially students, have become increasingly adept at finding information, following arguments, and exchanging opinions on the worldwide web, whether for personal interest or college credit.[11] In less than a decade, reading online has grown from the maligned activity of the few to the daily routine of the many, as newspapers know only too well.

[10] See Costs to Publishers (<http://cnx.org/content/m13914/latest/>) in Part II (<http://cnx.org/content/m13930/latest/>) of this report.

[11] The development is described well by Kate Wittenberg, "Beyond Google: What Next for Publishing," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 16 June 2006, http://chronicle.com/weekly/v52/i41/41b02001.htm (<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v52/i41/41b02001.htm>).