Call for contributions – *Bibliodiversity* journal

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Publishing and political commitment: a different way of being a publisher?

Issue coordinated by Sophie Noël (Paris 13 University)

Independent publishing; politically engaged publishing; critical, militant, underground, alternative publishing; progressive, resistant, marginal, dissident, unorthodox publishing, and so on. The terms used to define organisations developing an intellectually, artistically and/or politically ambitious publishing project, defying the dual trend of concentration and financial rationalisation that has characterised the mainstream publishing world for several decades, are extremely diverse, covering realities that are at once highly varied and rather unstable. The discussion around the terminology to be used in itself signals significant issues with and struggles for definition on the part of the various players involved. Yet at the same time all these terms share the common factor of pointing up a specific phenomenon: **the existence of publishing houses which see the publishing profession as a form of political commitment,** whatever specific forms this commitment takes. We should add, for clarity, that the aim here is to look at the sphere of small-scale production, supply-driven and characterised by a slow production cycle – rather than large-scale production driven by public demand and the fast pace of the commercial world.

Such complex dynamics make an interest in these politically engaged publishing operations, in their various forms, all the more valid: who are these publishers and how should we define them? What are the ideals, the business models that drive them? How do they work, in concrete terms? Do they have a specific or preferential approach to digital technologies (digitised content for production, social networks for promotion, etc.)? Do these players have their own specific modes of distribution, selling and promotion? How do they connect with their readers? What kinds of works and authors do they publish? With what kind of funding – private or public? What challenges do they encounter? What is their understanding of politically engaged publishing? What differences can be observed between the various geographic regions and national contexts considered? How do they manage to sustain their operations over the longer term – and at what cost? **The aim is to present findings that answer and illustrate these questions, giving us a better grasp of the contours, motivations and objectives of politically engaged publishing in the early 21st century.** Yet first we need to define the scope of this project, which can be outlined based on the following criteria:

- **The publishers considered can be organisations of varying size and legal status**: publishing micro-structures, cooperatives or associations operating semi-professionally, small and medium-sized professional companies, etc. Various models are possible where there is a basis of financial and legal independence: i.e. the publisher owns the business and therefore controls the operation's strategic and intellectual direction. Ultimately this criterion is one of the most objective definitions available to us, allowing us to maintain a distance from the byzantine and often normative disputes around what constitutes independence.

- **The experience of "young" publishers, or more precisely "new entrants"**, whose projects are as yet still taking shape and in the process of definition, seems to us especially worthy of interest: publishing strategies, use of new technologies, market positioning, relations to public authorities, etc. The aim is to widen the focus of our interest beyond the long-established players in the publishing landscape, which have often been studied before, and to pay particular attention to its newcomers.

- The borderline between professional and amateur publishing is a shifting one and many organisations occupy an intermediate territory that resists categorisation. Establishing a number of baseline professional criteria is vital in order define the boundaries of this project. At the risk of stating the obvious, the term "publisher" is understood here as referring to **organisations publishing books as their primary activity** – this excludes all forms of self-publishing by authors, which are driven by a very different logic, along with institutional publishing, which is primarily funded by public contracts. The signature of a commercial contract with the authors is a second criterion, even if rights payments to the authors remain notional due to the low sales volumes generated.

- Being a publisher, in the full sense of the term, implies **the pursuit of an intellectual project through an active search for authors, texts and ideas**. To pick up on the title of André Schiffrin's first book *L'édition sans éditeurs* (Publishing without Publishers), we are concerned with publishing *with* publishers, in the strongest sense of the word. Traditionally publishers are supposed to fulfil a "filter" or gatekeeper role between the ocean of production and what is actually published, i.e. made public. Yet beyond this classic intermediary role, the development of a distinctive editorial line is a further key element that defines the profession. Publishing is not just about book design and marketing, whether the medium is print or e-book, but also about having a vision of the type of books one wants to publish and acting accordingly: creating readers for works rather than the other way round.

- Politically engaged publishing is not confined to the social sciences, even though this field often leads the way due to its direct engagement with contemporary issues (economic, political, cultural questions, etc.). In many countries, publishing poetry, or translations of "marginal" literatures, reflects a strong and proactive commitment. **Several production sectors can therefore be considered**: essays and human sciences, but also literature, poetry, theatre, children's books, graphic novels, etc. Commitment as we understand it here refers not so much to a political dimension in the traditional sense as to a broader kind of commitment: an interest in the life of the *polis* or city state, in how we can live together, in the discussion of ideas.

- Commitment in terms of the published content, but also in terms of ***modes* of publication**, right down to the detail of daily working practices: the publishing house's relations with its subcontractors, bookshops, staff and authors and translators. These aspects of a publisher's work, so often glossed over, appear to us to be fundamental. A number of voices have called for an ethics-based approach to practising the profession, pointing out that independent players all too frequently replicate practices for which the major groups are vilified (where books are printed, relationships with bookstores, staff management, etc.). Examining innovative working practices in this field is therefore an issue of contemporary relevance.

- Finally, the ambition of going beyond the limitations of a single national arena to embrace a wider reality – with obvious comparative aims in mind – generates challenges all of its own. There are real risks of semantic drift and linguistic misunderstanding in the transition from one language to another, for example. Looking at the question of political commitment on an international scale makes it vital to clarify all the individual terms that are used, in order to draw out implicit differences in cases where there is no exact structural equivalence.

Guidelines for authors

Style of contributions

Of course we believe that bibliodiversity is important, something to be supported and strengthened – yet the magazine does not wish to defend any particular viewpoint, policy or school of thought. It wishes to remain an open forum for debate. We welcome, therefore, contributions that favour nuanced and critical approaches. The editors encourage authors to adopt an original approach, without indulging in fanciful speculation: concrete, yet without closing the door to analysis and conceptualisation; clearly argued – while allowing space for personal belief where this is appropriate.

Preferred author positioning

The articles are not intended to promote any particular institution. Of course, the writers will generally be attached to an organisation, which may be operating directly in the field under discussion; in which case it may well be appropriate for them to refer extensively to these activities. Nonetheless authors will understand that it is not desirable for the article to refer solely or continually to any particular organisation. If an extended reference illustrates the author's text especially well it can be included in a separate box within the text. As far as possible the main body of the text should retain a pluralist approach. The organisation to which the writer is attached can be described in a brief presentation.

Languages

The article should be written in French, English or Spanish – the writer should choose the language in which he or she feels most at ease (preferably his or her mother tongue).

Editorial

The editorial is written by the journal's editor or by the subject specialist for that issue.

Biography

We ask contributors to send us a biography – which should be fairly short (**around 800 characters including spaces**) and should outline the main stages in the author's professional career, with some emphasis on his or her experience relating to developing countries. A biography is a written text – a *curriculum vitae* cannot be considered as constituting a biography.

Photo

Contributors should send the editors a photograph of themselves, recent if possible and in either.jpeg or .gif format.

Summary

Authors are invited to provide the editors with a summary of their contribution, highlighting the key points of their argument and their main conclusions. This text should be **around 1,000 characters in length (including spaces)**.

Article

Articles should be a **maximum length of 25,000 characters** including spaces – whatever the language in which they are written. A margin of 10% either side of this total is acceptable. Authors are asked to give their contribution a title and to provide sub-headings for the different sections of their text.

Bibliographic references

Bibliodiversity journal conforms in the main to the ISO 690 international standard for bibliographic referencing (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISO_690). Only those bibliographic references that are cited in the text (this includes tables and charts) are presented at the end of the article; authors should check that these quotations match with their end list of references. The reference given in the body of the text should include the author's name and the year of publication. At the end of the article the references are presented in alphabetical order, without numbering.

Footnotes

A footnote gives a more in-depth explanation (not excessively long), developing an idea that extends beyond the subject of the article. A footnote can therefore be a digression – or even a personal aside – but in the context of this journal it is not primarily a bibliographic reference or source citation.

Visual elements

You are welcome to use visual elements in the form of charts, figures or tables to illustrate your argument.

Publication decision

Academic articles (excluding "The professional's perspective" articles) will be subjected to a double blind review process. The editors will ask two academic reviewers to read the submitted articles (in anonymised form). Articles will only be published if the evaluation is positive. If the opinions diverge a third reading may be required. Authors whose articles are accepted for publication are invited to take the comments made by their peer reviewers into consideration.

Modifications made by the editors

In order to maintain *Bibliodiversité*'s quality standards, and to make your contributions accessible to the widest possible readership, the editors reserve the right to modify the contributions you send them. They may need to shorten texts, for example, or adjust the order of the different sections, edit the content or modify all or some of the titles. Of course where major changes are necessary – or when the text does not conform sufficiently to the present guidelines – the article is returned to its author for revision. Any interventions made are kept to a minimum – always with the aim of serving the author's argument while benefiting the reader. Many thanks for your understanding and cooperation.

Dissemination

Authors are invited to assist with the dissemination of the journal. They can supply the editors with a list of contacts, which will be used only for the purposes of disseminating the issue to which that particular author has contributed and will not be passed on to third parties.

Contacts

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(:?!;) DOUBLE PONCTUATION

Alliance internationale des éditeurs indépendants