Notes of meeting 2 May 2014

<u>Present</u>

Professor Geoffrey Crossick, School of Advanced Study, University of London (Chair)
Ian Broadbridge, Arts and Humanities Research Council, representing RCUK
Samantha Burridge, Palgrave Macmillan
Ellen Collins, OAPEN-UK
Professor Nandini Das, University of Liverpool
Dr. Martin Paul Eve, University of Lincoln / OAPEN
Sally Hardy, Regional Studies Association
Brian Hole, Ubiquity Press
Professor John Holmwood, University of Nottingham
Ben Johnson, HEFCE (Secretary)
Cecy Marden, Wellcome Trust
Dr. David Prosser, Research Libraries UK
Dr. Frances Pinter, Knowledge Unlatched / Manchester University Press
Clare Powne, University of Exeter / SCONUL
Professor Alison Yarrington, Association of Art Historians / University of Hull

<u>Apologies</u>

Caroline Brazier, British Library
Richard Fisher, Cambridge University Press, representing The Publishers' Association
Professor Peter Mandler, Royal Historical Society / Cambridge

Update on research strands

1.   The Chair gave an update to the Group on the various research strands underway. These were being undertaken or overseen by the Chair and the Secretary (hereafter 'project team'), following advice from this Group and approval by the Steering Group.

<u>Patterns of scholarly communication: publisher data</u>

2.   The project team had sought information from four major academic publishers on the numbers of new monograph titles being published over a ten-year period. Data had been received from three, with data from the fourth expected very soon. The data so far received had shown significant organic growth over a ten-year period in the numbers of new monograph titles being published. The Group noted the following points in discussion:

        a. It was recognised that these data may successfully describe the health of monograph publishing within these publishers, but without data from smaller publishers it would be difficult to draw firm conclusions about the overall picture.

    b.   Data on acceptance rates may also be helpful here, as these would help to establish a link between growth in new titles and the ease of getting published (though it was noted that these data would be difficult to obtain and compare).

    c.   It may be useful to investigate how the proportion of UK academics within these figures had changed over time, as that would give a sense of any local trends.

    d.   It may also be necessary to compare these data with unit prices and print runs, as this comparison would give a better picture of any crisis within the monograph publishing industry.

<u>Patterns of scholarly communication: literature review</u>

3.   Ellen Collins presented a summary of the key findings of a draft literature review conducted for this project, covering priorities for scholarly communication within the humanities and social sciences; the fit of monographs into communication practices; and researchers' views on new technologies. It was agreed that the final literature review would receive a fuller discussion at the next meeting of the Group.

<u>Business models for open-access monographs</u>

4.   A key assumption of the project was that the viability of widespread open-access publishing of monographs would depend on the emergence of sustainable and mature business models. Research would therefore be needed into the economics of each broad type of model (advertising, author payments, cross-subsidy and so on). A number of questions would need to be asked, which were included in an invitation to tender. Though the research would look at each general model, if information on particular pilots was available, the project team would welcome its inclusion.

5.   In discussion, the Group noted that:

    a.   It would be essential to include the traditional ('reader pays') model in this research, to provide a benchmark for comparison of the open-access models.

    b.   In looking at how costs were recovered, the research could identify whether costs were recovered at the level of the individual monograph or whether costs and income could be aggregated to allow for cross-subsidy.

<u>Patterns of scholarly communication: REF and RAE data</u>

6.   The project team had investigated how the proportion of monographs submitted to research assessments had changed between RAE2008 and REF2014. The data showed a decline of roughly 20% in the proportion of authored books, edited books and scholarly editions submitted to REF, compared with RAE. The decline was noticed for almost all units of assessment within which the book was a significant output (i.e. greater than 15% of the submission for that unit of assessment in RAE2008). The Group made the following points in discussion:

      a. The data did not reflect how use of the double-weighting facility in both exercises may have changed over time, which may have had a very significant impact on the data.

      b. While the data do not necessarily indicate any significant patterns or trends within the wider world of scholarly communication, they perhaps instead indicate the esteem in which particular outputs are felt to be held by the REF, and by extension the wider scholarly community. However, while there may be some overlap between the profile of material submitted to the REF and the profile of material thought necessary for career advancement, this overlap was unlikely to be total.

Particular disciplinary challenges

7.   The Chair noted that several disciplines faced particular challenges in implementing open access, and that discussions had taken place with academics and others within these disciplines to seek to understand these challenges better. The main issue was around making third party material openly accessible, which was generally felt to be very difficult or costly. Further discussions were planned with academics within Art History, English, Music and Dance. The Group noted that Drama and other performing arts may also face particular issues, and recommended that the project team make contact with a representative of this discipline. The Group also noted that book illustrations would pose issues for all disciplines, as illustrators would need to agree to make their work openly accessible.

Researchers' perspectives

8.   The Chair noted the importance of gathering the views of those at an early stage in their career to determine how they perceive the importance of monograph authorship to their career and to their scholarship. To that end, a focus group of early career researchers was being convened from nominees from British Academy, ESRC and AHRC fellowship schemes. The Group noted that it may also be important to capture the views of early career researchers that may have found it more difficult to begin an academic career and that learned societies might be a suitable route for reaching out to a wider group of researchers.

9.   The Chair also noted that a similar focus group of senior academics would be meeting the following week to explore issues of the importance of monograph authorship in appointments and promotions, and that OAPEN-UK and HEFCE were running a joint survey of academics to seek more targeted views on a broader range of issues relating to monographs and open access.

10.   The Group noted the relationship between a researcher's PhD thesis and (often) his/her first book. It was accepted that this was not an issue particular to open access monographs per se; the issue is related to publishers' and libraries' treatment of proposed or published works based on open-access theses. A general consensus

among traditional and open-access publishers was that theses would typically need significantly reworking before publishing as a book.

<u>Library practices and perspectives</u>

11.   The Chair noted with thanks that the SCONUL longitudinal statistics for library book purchases had been shared with the project team. A call for qualitative evidence to SCONUL members had been made, and further efforts would be made to engage with the library community on these issues.

Monographs and open licensing

12.   Martin Eve introduced an item on open licensing, together with some qualifying remarks on a paper circulated to the Group in advance of the meeting. The Group made the following points in discussion:

       a.   The need for open licensing was a clear and well-defined part of many definitions of open access, and the problems associated with more restrictive licences (e.g. stifling future innovation) were a well-recognised component of open access advocacy;

       b.   Cultural norms, attitudes and practices among researchers might present a barrier to the uptake of more liberal licences, including some of the Creative Commons (CC) licences which were felt by some to 'encourage' poor academic practice. The degree of confidence about the extent to which this barrier could be overcome rested both on predictions of the ability of academic norms to take priority over licences' permissions and on the complementarity of academic norms and open licenses more generally (and these might vary case-by-case);

       c.   Consensus among academics was therefore hard to achieve about the preferred terms of licensing academic material, with some licensing distinctions – particularly commercial re-use – having distinctly personal and political dimensions;

       d.   While CC licenses were noted for their international portability, the true international picture is complex, and encompasses a range of different legal and jurisdictional interpretations of both national and international law.

The changing nature of peer review

13.   Nandini Das introduced an item on changing practices of peer review. As context, a number of general issues about peer review were raised:

       a.   the sustainability of peer review in the context of a growing research publications base;

       b.   the emergence of alternative models of peer review (e.g. post-publication peer review)

       c.   the ability of open access to act as a catalyst for changing peer review; and

d. the perceptual relationship between peer review, quality and open access.

Discussion focussed on emerging trends within peer review, the desirable features of any peer review system, and the links between the changes to peer review and the rise of open access.

14. The following emerging trends were noted:
   a. The identification of peer reviewers by publishers was noted as being a labour-intensive task. Some felt that some publishers were not giving this task due attention for books, and that this might be a growing problem. The function of editorial committees was generally seen as key to successful identification of appropriate peer reviewer for a book.
   b. It was recognised that peer review depended on a strong ecology of trust between publishers, reviewers and authors; this ecology might be weakened by any neglect of the peer review process by any of these actors. Some Group members reported cases of peer review not being conducted properly, including anecdotal evidence of only the abstracts of books being reviewed, for instance.
   c. There was seen to be a symbiotic relationship between the strength of the peer review process and a publisher's reputation, and that this reputation may take time to form and nurture. This was felt to represent a barrier to newer imprimaturs establishing themselves.

15. The following desirable features of peer review were noted:
   a. Concerns about the rigour of peer review, especially for books, might be alleviated through increased transparency about review processes, the adoption of minimum standards, kite-marking, or greater accountability for reviewers. It was noted that any increased transparency ought to be balanced against the need for closed review for controversial works.
   b. While new forms of peer review were seen as a welcome development by the Group, it was agreed that there are clear benefits and drawbacks of all forms of peer review, and there may be no perfect model.
   c. There was felt to be a clear need for general support for peer review, as this was seen as being a poorly recognised academic activity. This might include providing training for peer reviewers, or advocacy from research funders for support at the institutional level. A desire was noted for the academic community to recommit to the activities of peer review as part of a general recommitment to the wider scholarly 'project'.

16. The following links between open access and peer review were noted:
   a. The Group noted recent concerns around predatory open access publishers, but agreed that it would be important not to mix up concerns around peer review (which is about quality assurance) and open access (which is about payment).

b. It was agreed that any move towards open access and any changes to peer review may be related, but that one is not the cause of the other. Developments towards open access were felt to represent an opportunity to trial new forms of review, but that this was not a necessary condition of open access.

Actions

➢ **BJ**: Add a fuller discussion on the literature review to the next meeting agenda.
➢ **BJ**: Defer a discussion on the materiality of the book to the next meeting agenda.