

DIY Peer Review and Monograph Publishing in the Arts and Humanities

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Abstract

In order to explore monograph peer review in the Arts and Humanities, this article introduces and discusses an applied example, examining the route to publication of Danielle Fuller and DeNel Rehberg Sedo's *Reading Beyond the Book: The Social Practices of Contemporary Literary Culture* (2013). The book's co-authors supplemented the traditional "blind" peer review system with a range of practices including the informal, DIY review of colleagues and "clever friends," as well as using the feedback derived from grant applications, journal articles, and book chapters. The article "explodes" the book into a series of documents and non-linear processes to demonstrate the significance of the various forms of feedback to the development of Fuller and Rehberg Sedo's monograph. The analysis reveals substantial differences between book and article peer review processes, including an emphasis on marketing in review forms and the pressures to publish, that the co-authors navigated through the introduction of "clever friends" to the review processes. These findings, drawing on Science and Technology Studies (STS), demonstrate how such a research methodology can identify how knowledge is constructed in the Arts and Humanities, and potential implications for the valuation of research processes and collaborations.

Key Words:

Peer review; scholarly publishing; monographs; co-authorship

Introduction

Peer review is a ubiquitous aspect of scholarly publishing, often implicated in discussions about academic labour, prestige, and the ongoing viability of scholarly presses. However, peer review practices remain somewhat underrepresented in scholarly discussion in the Arts and Humanities, particularly in the case of monograph publishing (Butchard et al., 2017). This is despite the continuing importance of book publishing in the twenty-first century academy, a factor indicated by contemporary debates over the "gold standard" or,

alternatively, the “tyranny of the monograph” that have emphasised and challenged its importance for Arts and Humanities researchers. Although the basic concepts remain the same, the uses of peer review for evaluation of monographs differ from scholarly journals in several ways, and this article aims to interrogate the specific circumstances, challenges and opportunities of review practices for monograph publishing in the Arts and Humanities. This article takes an empirical approach to academic book publishing in the Arts and Humanities. Our methodology is informed by detailed science and technology studies (STS), in particular Greg Myers’s tracing of texts’ pre-publication history in *Writing Biology: Texts in the Social Construction of Scientific Knowledge* (1990). With the permission and participation of its authors, we consider the route to publication of Danielle Fuller and DeNel Rehberg Sedo’s *Reading Beyond the Book: The Social Practices of Contemporary Literary Culture* (2013). *Reading Beyond the Book* addresses the rise and development of mass reading events (MREs) in the UK, US and Canada from the turn of the 21st century onwards, and analyses their role in contemporary shared reading practices. It deploys a wide range of primary methodologies, and draws in conceptual thinking across disciplines, including cultural and media studies, sociology, and the history of the book. Our approach is influenced by textual scholarship’s attention to how texts are shaped and developed, and we explore *Reading Beyond the Book* in terms of Bryant’s account of the “fluid text” as “a single physical document containing the remnants of multiple versions” (2002: 69).¹ We draw on the finalised book (including paratexts such as its Acknowledgements); draft versions; the book proposal; the publisher’s formal peer reviews (henceforth identified as peer reviewers 1-3); feedback given on the manuscript from six “clever friends” (identified as clever friends 1-6) and interviews with the two authors, in order to excavate how various forms of review contributed to changing iterations of the text.² We do not intend to generalise the particularities of the experience of *Reading Beyond the Book*, but use it as an example to explore certain factors of Arts and Humanities monograph publishing: non-linear processes; pressures to publish; peer review and market orientation; quality and editing; and co-authorship.

¹ The article also draws inspiration from the wider work of textual scholarship including McKenzie’s “sociology of text” (1999), Hannah Sullivan’s work on revision, and Kirschenbaum and Reside’s forensic examination of track changes (2013).

² It is noted that one of the authors’ “clever friends” was one of the co-authors of this article.

Peer review in monograph publishing draws attention to evaluation of profit, value, scholarly quality and marketing. Although there are many variations in peer review models across different academic presses, it is possible to identify some “standard procedures” associated with monographs in the Arts and Humanities. Butterfield provides a helpful overview:

Typically, the author sends a book proposal, which may include two or three chapters as samples of the work, to a publisher. If the publisher is interested in the book, the proposal is sent to two or more peer reviewers with expertise in the topic area, methods, and so on.... Depending on the reviews, and the suggestions or recommendations of representatives of the publishing company, revisions may be required before issuing a book contract. The common assumption is that this is the end of any type of review process; the author writes the book and submits it to the publisher for printing. (2011: 114)

This “common assumption” of the process of peer review of monographs is illustrated in Figure 1. However, peer review can take place at a number of different stages in a monograph’s development: for the book proposal, but also for one or more chapters, or a full manuscript. The types of feedback also vary, as reviews might be by “academic peers” or an acquisitions editor, and the overall process “may be in the hands of the publisher, an academic board, a series editor, or the book editor” (Verleysen and Engels, 2012: 428). Authors can suggest potential peer reviewers, and feedback may also be sought outside the official publishing process, as our case study unfolds. A book’s route to publication can be characterised as much by non-linear processes and informal feedback as by the standard, or rather “idealised” process represented by Figure 1. Indeed, this article explores whether the constrained processes of formal peer review call into question the purported “gold standard” of the monograph. As the example of *Reading Beyond the Book* demonstrates, unless authors proactively seek out feedback from a wider scholarly community, formal peer review practices, active editorial intervention and academic rigour can be limited. The “value-added” that a scholarly publisher affords through its editorial processes might thus be interrogated, as might the valuation of monographs so highly in career advancement and research ranking systems.

[Insert Figure 1: The idealised monograph peer review process]

Non-linear Processes

Outside of book sprints, events where a team of authors produce a book in less than a week and often in the space of a weekend (Barker et al, 2013), the monograph's gestation is necessarily lengthy and complex. The acknowledgements for *Reading Beyond the Book* document the extent of the book's network of four funding bodies, eight prior publications, over a hundred individuals, and six pets (2013: xv–xix). The earliest work on the book dates from a 2004 British Academy grant and the process from initial idea to monograph took over nine years. Rather than a straightforward trajectory from idea to book, the historical development of *Reading Beyond the Book* was non-linear and an accumulation of documents, pre-existing publications and the pressure to complete in time for the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF), the UK's system for assessing research.

[Insert Figure 2 *A four-layered model of Reading Beyond the Book's development*]

As a co-authored monograph, *Reading Beyond the Book* is atypical for arts and humanities scholarship.³ Nonetheless, every book is an accumulation of documents and processes. For example, before any formal peer review process, authors produce multiple drafts and may send chapters to colleagues for informal peer review. These processes amalgamate into the scholarly “fluid text,” a trail of manuscripts, documents and post-publication editions that “more closely approximate our thoughts” than a static product (Bryant, 2002: 1). Figure 2 maps the non-linear development of *Reading Beyond the Book*. The diagram identifies four layers of relationships embedded within the book's publication history and development: *people, events, documents, and publications*. In this article, we focus on the relationship between people and documents in the formal and informal peer review process conducted by Fuller and Rehberg Sedo. We “explode” the book through textual analysis of documents produced during the monograph development process (email correspondence, draft chapters, earlier publications, and corrected proofs) accompanied by interviews of the co-authors to analyse its constituent processes and highlight the importance of review.

The peer review structures for monograph publishing, in contradiction to the idealised form represented in Figure 1, are built around intentional non-linearity. For example, simultaneous

³ Tanner (2016: 23n17) notes monographs submitted to the 2014 REF had an average of 1.20 authors, while edited collections feature 1.92 editors, indicating a more collaborative approach to the latter.

submissions of book proposals are acceptable, while the same process for article manuscripts is not. Scholars can juggle submissions according to publishers' response times. The authors of *Reading Beyond the Book* initially targeted presses sequentially. However, frustrated by the delay of waiting for responses, including eight months for a rejection from one US university press, the authors followed advice from clever friend 1 to target multiple publishers simultaneously. This resulted in concurrent interest from a commercial academic press and an American University Press. In interview, Fuller noted a further non-linear pathway to publication, explaining that the UK division of the commercial publisher rejected an early version of the proposal, but an editor at the New York office, operating on a different disciplinary list, later offered the co-authors a contract (2017). The submission process is discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Reading Beyond the Book's non-linear development extended beyond the informal clever friend review process to include the experience of several prior rounds of peer review. The AHRC grant, central to the development of the final project after initial collaborations, underwent extensive peer review with a chance to engage with the reviewers' comments (Rehberg Sedo Interview, 2017), shaping the early development of the final output. Likewise, several sections of the book were published as book chapters and journal articles between the start of the grant and final publication. The prior publications stand alone from the monograph, but their formal review process helped to shape the final monograph in two ways: (1) by refining the methodology and argument through the negotiation between authors and reviewers; and (2) by highlighting elements that might not fit the publication but can be reused in other forms.

The development of Chapter Two, "Television," illustrates how previous peer review might have shaped the book's argument. The acknowledgements note the chapter borrows from an *Information, Communication & Society* article (Rehberg Sedo, 2008), and a book chapter from *The Richard and Judy Book Club Reader* (Fuller and Rehberg Sedo, 2011). Both publications include case studies of the Richard and Judy Book Club that is central to "Television." The chapter accumulated a wealth of peer review from the clever friends, the feedback from the prior publications, and its submission as part of the book proposal. With two prior publications, the expectation might be that "Television" rehashes content from the older outputs. However, as with other aspects of its publication process, *Reading Beyond the Book* resists linear treatment: the co-authors' rich dataset ensured they could offer fresh

analyses for each publication. The co-authors acknowledge “small sections” and “several paragraphs” came from these prior publications, but these terms belie the newness of chapter two. Elements of description remain consistent across publications, but each output provides a different level of context. *Reading Beyond the Book* presents a longer narrative around Richard and Judy’s place in British society and the development of their book club, something unnecessary for a specialised journal article or a chapter in a book dedicated to the topic. While this new emphasis was encouraged by the formal peer reviewers and clever friend 2, as detailed below, the territory-marking process in relation to prior publications remains an important part of a monograph’s development.

The use of peer review from previous publications does not end with the completion of the monograph. *Reading Beyond the Book* became part of an on-going research trajectory, and the book’s co-authors have continued to collaborate since its publication in 2013, with three further short-form publications related to the book. The 2014 publication of “Reproducing ‘the Wow Factor’?” extended elements of the book that were excluded from the “Workers” chapter on the advice of clever friend 2, who suggested the co-authors “might hang on to versions of the ‘wow’ factor and bits of the ‘taste-makers’ part” for what Fuller describes as a “cannibal publication.” (Fuller Email, 2009). The on-going connections between publications emphasize removal and renewal as much as continuity: arguments that no longer have a purpose in the larger piece can be reused for future projects. Monographs require more substantial differentiation from journal articles due to the unique pressures to publish and market considerations discussed in the following two sections.

Pressures to Publish

Monograph publishing is a significant milestone in the pursuit of a professional academic career in the Arts and Humanities, often described as a “gold standard” for scholarly quality. The Crossick report on *Monographs and Open Access* found that “for a significant part of the UK research community... the monograph and the research book more generally are central to their discipline” (2015: 13, 16). This was a factor in the development of *Reading Beyond the Book*; describing the project’s early stages, Rehberg Sedo recalls “thinking quite strategically for both of us, because we were both so early in our careers... we already knew that a book would be at the end” (Rehberg Sedo Interview, 2017). Though Crossick cautions against “generalising about the need for monographs to secure promotions” (2015: 16),

interviews, surveys and articles consistently reveal a perceived link between monograph publishing and career progression for Arts and Humanities researchers. Williams et al reported “universal agreement” among a cross-section of scholars who considered the monograph “essential for promotion, and increasingly for obtaining a first position” (2009: 74). For Mole, “monographs feature prominently in hiring and promotion decisions, increasing the pressure on scholars at all career stages to think of their work in terms of monograph publication” (2016: 13), while Terras reflects that “in the humanities, the monograph’s the thing” after securing a “rapid promotion” with a prestigious book contract (2014: n.pag.).⁴ In a climate of insecurity and uncertain job prospects, the monograph is not only a means of disseminating research, but also a stepping-stone to future career achievement.

In the context of significant pressure to publish, issues of economics, prestige and academic labour accumulate around contemporary monograph publishing. Recalling the search for a publisher, Rehberg Sedo comments “we wanted to ensure that we were going to get a publisher who was of good reputation” (Rehberg Sedo Interview, 2017), and Fuller had clear objectives: “I wanted to publish in the States, and ideally with a university press” (Fuller Interview, 2017). Fuller and Rehberg Sedo took steps to mitigate the challenge of finding a suitable publisher, seeking informal feedback on the book proposal from its earliest stages. The authors asked established academics to comment on a proposal draft in 2007, and “completely reworked it” in response (Fuller Interview, 2017). Despite these precautions, the route to publication was complicated by publishers’ reluctance to take on an unconventional interdisciplinary project:

We talked to various publishers, including [a UK university press] – they weren’t interested at all, that didn’t really surprise us – and got a lot of rejections. Nice ones! It was difficult for several reasons [...] it didn’t fit in the more conventional publishers – they just didn’t have lists that it fitted. (Fuller Interview, 2017)

⁴ In the United States, the monograph’s importance for securing tenure has been vigorously debated; as in Lindsay Waters’s critique of the “tyranny of the monograph” in American academic institutions (2001: n.pag.) See, for example, the 2003 MLA report arguing that universities and colleges should relinquish book publication as a “gold standard” for promotion, and Stephen Greenblatt’s “Special Letter” to the MLA articulating a “maddening double-bind” in expectations that researchers seeking promotion must produce “a full-length scholarly book published by a reputable press” (2002: n.pag.). *The Academic Book of the Future Project Report* addresses ‘The enduring value of the academic book’ within a UK context (Deegan, 2017: 38-44).

In all cases, the proposal was desk-rejected by editors before reaching the stage of peer review. Eventually, after “about half a dozen rejections,” the authors sought “interventionary help” from more established academics, including (but not limited to) “all the older feminist women we knew”, several of whom contacted editors on their behalf. As noted above, in 2009-10 Fuller followed advice to dispatch the proposal and two sample chapters to multiple publishers: “I ended up drawing up a list and just mailing everything off, at the same time, to about twelve different places, and just saying up front, we’re multiple mailing” (Fuller Interview, 2017). This proved successful, indicating the importance of support from peers for practical advice as well as feedback and reviewing.

The extended timescale of securing a publishing contract introduces a specific pressure on Arts and Humanities researchers. For many UK researchers, the place of monographs within the REF sets a *de facto* deadline for publication. Monographs are among the few pieces of research that can be double-weighted in the REF structure, and Mole suggests “REF [...] panels tend to value monographs highly” (2016: 13).⁵ Tanner’s report on submissions to REF 2014 concludes that “the importance of books is clear for the Arts and Humanities,” since “authored books account for a range from 9% to 25% of submissions with an overall average in Panel D of 16.6% of submissions” (2016: 17). Tanner detects a flood of books published just in time for REF 2014, observing that “there is a clear pressure on academics to publish in advance of the REF deadline” (2016: 26). The same pressure is then transferred to academic publishers, a “massive cyclical bulge [...] to nobody’s long-term advantage” (Fisher, 2016: 8.) This is borne out in our case study.

As mentioned in the previous section, *Reading Beyond the Book* received interest from editors at two publishers in the US, one a commercial academic company, one a university press, prompting Fuller to consider how the publishers’ production schedules might affect her REF submission:

Effectively what happened was the [eventual publisher] came back faster, and had had it read by three reviewers. [...] It was clear that [the US University Press] were going to be much slower – I actually asked them what the production timeline was.

⁵ Despite the option to double-weight monographs, Tanner’s report shows that “the proportion of books requested for consideration of double-weighting was remarkably low with the overall average ~25.5%.” (2016: 28).

Already, there was a lot of pressure about getting things out in time for the REF. I was worried about the prestige of the press versus the whole REF thing, and I asked senior people here at the university for advice, including someone who was on our project advisory board, and they said [...] I think the timing is more important, and it will probably create less anxiety for you if it's out sooner rather than later. And so, we went with Routledge. (Fuller Interview, 2017)

In this instance, the authors' choice of publisher was directly influenced by the need to consider timely publication for REF submission, showing how various pressures can coalesce in the late stages of a monograph project. Although both authors were pleased with the eventual home for their book, in decisions around publication, questions of quality and prestige can come into conflict with the need to demonstrate scholarly achievement to a specific deadline, while also enabling research "impact".⁶

Peer Review and Market Orientation

"While writing an academic book is a scholarly pursuit," Banks reminds readers in her discussion of monograph publishing, "as an author you need to remember that book publishing is a business" (2016: 140). This succinct advice captures a significant aspect of academic monograph publishing: the pressures of market and profitability. Concerns about the potential for profit appear to be unavoidable in academic monograph publishing, where even subsidised scholarly presses are commercial enterprises subject to economic concerns. Schatz outlines the difficulties this can cause, placing the trials of university presses within the context of a wider situation in higher education institutions:

Like all of higher education, the university press arena is under siege, racked by funding and budget cuts, and learning to operate with razor-thin profit margins – if

⁶ The REF's commitment to "impact" may also encourage swift publication. Describing the results of a market research survey for Palgrave MacMillan, McCall and Bourke-Waite also note a link between the REF requirements and pressure to publish quickly, where many respondents "wanted to be able to publish research reacting to current affairs more quickly, especially in response to the Research Excellence Framework's request for academics to prove their works' impact" (2016: 34).

not debilitating losses, which has been the case with far too many academic publishers. (2016: 152)⁷

This is not to suggest that scholarly presses are overtly or exclusively “for profit”. Eve notes that “many presses, and especially university presses, formally exist to circulate academic excellence and deploy massive cross-subsidy between their commercial success stories and their esoteric-yet-valuable monographs” (2014: 117). Nevertheless, the “razor-thin profit margins” identified by Schatz appear to have had significant effects for *Reading Beyond the Book*; Fuller recalls an apologetic rejection from an editor at a large UK university press, who explained that after the economic crisis of 2008, the press had become “even more conservative” (Fuller Interview, 2017). Another press was “only publishing 25 books a year” and responded, in Fuller’s paraphrase, “we’re up to our 25, most of them are first timers, kind of, the end” (Fuller interview, 2017).

Emphasis on market orientation is evident throughout the publishing process, from the proposal stage onwards, and is indicative of publishers’ concerns about *demand* for their publications in a period of increasing supply (Fisher, 2016). Fitzpatrick illustrates concerns about projected sales with the example of her monograph’s rejection by a scholarly press whose marketing department “overruled” the editorial board, judging the book a “financial risk... in the current economy” (2011: 2). Authors submitting a monograph proposal are asked to provide indications of marketability and opportunities for promotion, with varying levels of detail. This demand is borne out in the proposal for *Reading Beyond the Book*, which includes a lengthy section on market orientation, including a full description of the target market and a copious list of options for promotion after the monograph is published. The authors list twenty-three “associations through which we can promote *Beyond the Book*”, forty “Suggested Journals to Approach for Reviews”, ten examples of “Trade Journals, Publications, Websites and other Media through which we can promote the book”, all supplemented by a substantial account of competing books. The proposal reviewers lauded the authors’ acute awareness of the market, and the authors reaffirmed the book’s marketability in their response to the peer reviewers. Ultimately, it is unclear how such extensive market research influenced the editorial decision.

⁷ For more on the discussion of a “crisis” in academic publishing, see Greenblatt (2003), Ferwerda (2010); for the impact on peer review, see Alonso et al (2003).

In the circumstances of a publishing industry “under siege,” the impetus for profitable publication necessarily becomes entwined with the peer review process. Levine observes that “as long as university presses continue to tie their profits to the production of printed books, peer review of monographs will be bound up with the crisis in academic publishing” (2007: 102), while Verleysen and Engels imply a direct link between peer review and marketing, asking “is [peer review] of books focused on the academic content or is it also an assessment by the publisher of the commercial potential of the book?” (2012: 428). The wording of review forms indicates the intertwining of profit margins and peer review in monograph publishing. The publisher’s review form for *Reading Beyond the Book* focused heavily on market considerations, with six of the sixteen total questions referring specifically to the market, second only to the seven questions about the proposal’s academic quality. These questions then split between weighing the reviewers’ judgement of the market against the information provided in the proposal and checking whether the reviewers would purchase a copy for personal or library use. (Peer reviewer 2 did not use the form, and while the first part of their report followed the structure of the peer reviewer form, it evaded the queries about the book’s potential market.)

A monograph’s marketability for libraries is essential, since the high cost of hardback academic monographs means that library purchases continue to be a significant market for these books. Ferwerda partly attributes a “crisis” in academic publishing to a collapse in library purchases (2010: 136). Aware of the prohibitive cost of hardbacks, Fuller was keen to ensure *Reading Beyond the Book* also appeared in paperback:

I really wanted to have a paperback from the beginning, so I asked upfront about that, as well, at what point would paperback be possible – would it be possible? They said you have to sell 200 hardbacks, or something. And so actually, we did a lot of work to market the book as well. I knew that was a thing they weren’t going to do any of, but then again it’s very rare that any academic publisher does that. (Fuller Interview, 2017)

The promise of a paperback extends the outsourcing of market research to authors and reviewers by offering a cheaper edition of the book as a reward for active post-publication marketing by the co-authors. Fuller’s previous experience in publishing – as “somebody that

actually knew something about how the industry works” – helped her to navigate the marketing process once the book was published. Taking charge of marketing the book, the authors requested flyers from the publisher for conferences, and publicised it themselves on listservs and networks. They paid an editorial assistant to generate a list of library catalogues in Anglophone countries and emailed “specific people, librarians and people we knew in those institutions and asked if they’d order it”. Fuller’s drive for a paperback edition reduced the prohibitive price tag and made the work more widely available: particularly since the release of a paperback edition in 2015 “brought down the price of the ebook as well” (Fuller Interview, 2017).

The book proposal’s marketing section suggested the book had the potential to cross over to a number of different disciplines. In principle, this is an ideal proposition for a publisher, where broad appeal helps marketability.⁸ However, a repeated aspect of editors’ feedback was that the cross-disciplinary nature of the work meant it “didn’t fit” with existing series. Despite the potential for a wide audience, the authors had to work hard to persuade editors of the value of their work, and take control of marketing to ensure it reached a wide audience. The interdisciplinary nature of the book also presented challenges in the writing of the manuscript, and the authors sought feedback and advice from clever friends to ensure that the book would make sense to, and work for, a varied readership. In such circumstances, peer review takes on a multifaceted role – not only as a “gatekeeper model” for ensuring a high standard of academic work, but also as a means of identifying and developing a work’s appeal to a particular readership or group of readers.

Quality and Editing

For many authors, the process of writing and editing a manuscript is guided by considerable additional review, feedback and advice subsequent to the proposal being accepted. Butterfield describes “additional peer review and discussion” at later stages of writing her book, including a draft manuscript sent out to two peer reviewers, an editorial meeting that resulted in “major revisions of selected chapters” and comments sought from an expert copyeditor and

⁸ There is also the question of crossing over to a popular readership: responding to the impression of an academic press “under siege”, Smoodin observes that “Many of us have the sense that editors feel increasing pressure to find books that will ‘cross over’ from an academic audience to a popular one” (2016: 146).

publishing consultant. Butterfield observes that her book received “extensive review and feedback from peers... perhaps to an extent beyond what any article submitted for publication may receive” (2011: 115), and an examination of the trajectory of *Reading Beyond the Book* shows a similar complexity.

Peer review can take a multitude of forms in the process of monograph publishing, complicating the idealised model illustrated in Figure 1. While peer review is often discussed in terms of a “gatekeeping” model, whose core purpose is to identify errors and weed out insubstantial work, it has considerable value as a means of strengthening a work and diversifying its appeal for a variety of readers. Comparing the traditional peer review process with her experience of online open review for the manuscript of *Planned Obsolescence*, Fitzpatrick finds “obvious benefits” in the introduction of “a wider range of intelligible perspectives and voices, able to uncover a larger number of problems” (2011:190). In these terms, review can be a way of improving quality, reaching out to a wider academic community, bridging gaps between disciplines and helping to invite what Banks calls a “hybrid audience” for the work (2016: 140). However, the multiple desk-rejections that *Reading Beyond the Book* received meant that the majority of publishers they approached did not engage the wider academic community in their decisions, and missed potential “hybrid” audiences.

Contemplating the many “complicated steps” of taking a book from proposal to publication, Banks draws attention to the potential to “create your own” review process:

If your scholarship sits between two fields, request that your reviewers come from both of these areas... Alternately, you can create your own review process--asking a diversity of colleagues with distinct specialities or who surround the periphery of your discipline to read your book (or at least the introduction). Ask them if there is something missing that their readership would need or want in order to best engage with the book. (2016: 140)

In this account, Banks identifies major advantages of DIY review processes for the development of a book project. As with Banks’ experience, Fuller and Rehberg Sedo received three formal peer reviews for *Reading Beyond the Book* solicited by its eventual publisher. The publisher’s review form included question prompts in addition to the market-

oriented mentioned earlier, including whether the book was field-leading or not, and whether the authors were able to deliver the project (intellectually, or the question could also imply institutionally). All three reviews were positive and recommended publication.

The language of the three reviews was still somewhat tentative. For the reviewers, this was explicitly a result of only having seen a partial submission, rather than a full manuscript, with peer reviewer 1 responding to a question prompt that, “The book’s outline seems pretty well organized to me. Of course I’ve only seen the proposal and two chapters” (peer reviewer 1 report, 2011). Peer reviewer 2 couched their more negative feedback by commenting that, “Again, I want to stress that this may well be an effect of the fact that I have only read a portion of the manuscript” (peer reviewer 2 report, 2011). All three reviewers made recommendations for the full manuscript, from “a very minor” one based on peer reviewer 1’s preference for footnote rather than in-text referencing in order to deal with “theoretical niceties” which might otherwise be “intrusive in the main text”, to more substantial suggestions. These included the creation of a methods appendix from peer reviewer 3 (which the authors did), advice from peer reviewer 2 to offer a more thorough historicised understanding of the development of the “reading industry”, and a more rigorous application of Bourdieusian capitals with regards to their topic (although this was softened by peer reviewer 3 stating it was a “personal peccadillo”) (peer reviewer 2 and 3 reports, 2011). These hedges are an important deferential act in academic discourse to demonstrate “collegial respect for the views of colleagues” (Hyland, 2000: 179) but in the case of a monograph publishing decision, they also reflect the financial stakes for the publisher in comparison to the relative lack of accountability for the reviewer.

Based on the reviews, and a response from Fuller and Rehberg Sedo, the publisher’s commissioning editor successfully took the proposal to their editorial board, and the book was contracted. As such, the formal peer review for *Reading Beyond the Book* followed the gatekeeping and strengthening process described by Butterfield. However, given the protracted process of finding a publisher for the book, and the authors’ desire to make it as strong as possible, Fuller and Rehberg Sedo had already initiated a review process identified by Banks as “create your own”.

The traces of this DIY process are clearly evidenced in *Reading Beyond the Book*’s Acknowledgements. Such effusive thanks are not uncommon in monographs, but Fuller and

Rehberg Sedo's shows how they enabled an informal review process, incorporating their advisory committee, mentors and clever friends. The authors' process replicated Banks' advice, particularly with regards to the interdisciplinary nature of their work. Fuller described this in interview:

I realised we weren't going to get a publisher that would really give us any critical editorial feedback, which is fairly rare these days anyway, but at least in some circumstances you can get it. But I realised we were never getting a publisher that was going to do that, so I thought, let's just make up our own review process, so that we know we're not getting things too wrong. And one of the big incentives for doing it was that we were concerned that because it was interdisciplinary, we wanted to be sure that it was legible and comprehensible to particular disciplines – a whole series of disciplines as it turned out – and also that we weren't getting things terrifically wrong... (2017)

Fuller and Rehberg Sedo therefore sent out chapters to sets of paired readers, carefully chosen in order to bring in feedback from scholars within their own disciplines, but also to test the interdisciplinary nature of their work with experts from other fields. The whole book was then read by three individuals, two of whom were the authors' partners (thereby bringing in a very particular emotional labour to the process). As attested by the Acknowledgements, at least 17 informal reviewers were involved, a total which does not include formal peer reviewers of earlier journal articles, or feedback from conference presentations, and the project's advisory board. Such extensive readings were sought because of the authors' wish to make the book "as good as it could possibly be [...] the only way to make it that robust, was to get lots of feedback along the way" (Fuller Interview, 2017).

The impact of the informal reviewers can be traced through several of the book's transitions. For example, an early version of the text had a lengthy opening chapter (c20% of the total book), but clever friend 4 suggested a "much shorter, fleeter introductory chapter, which explains the topic, contexts, thesis, and structure, and then a second which focused on The Reading Industry" when providing feedback on the complete manuscript. This was, Fuller stated in interview, "a kind of on-the-nose 'aha!' moment, and was really helpful", resulting in an eventual 12-page Introduction, and a subsequent chapter on "Reading". Notably, these sections were not available to the publishers' readers, and so the formal peer review process

did not touch on these sections. The suggestion from peer reviewer 2 to include a more thorough historicised understanding of the development of the reading industry, mentioned earlier in this section, elicited a response from the authors to the publisher to the effect that ‘our book is not intended to provide a history of ‘the reading industry’, although they did assert that the book would relate the history of mass reading events, and “the extent to which we believe MREs create new readers” (Fuller and Rehberg Sedo Email, 2011).

As detailed above, the development of the second chapter of the book focusing on “Television” included previous versions which had appeared in shorter articles and book chapters. The formal peer review process also commented upon the chapter, as it was one of the two submitted to the publisher with the proposal. Peer reviewer 2 urged more information “about the character of televised magazine programs in Britain, about Richard and Judy as particular celebrities, and about especially why they actually decided to do a book club in the first place”, in order to establish “why and how they had such an impact on British publishing” (peer reviewer 2 report, 2011). Peer reviewer 3, as mentioned above, argued for “a more rigorous application” of Bourdieu, and an introduction which “outlines, defines and de-lineages how these terms [capital, field] are used in the book might help”. This reviewer also argued for more context for the “backstory” of the Richard and Judy Book Club, and delineated some of this in the review (peer reviewer 3 report, 2011). However, the commentary provided by the formal peer reviewers was supplemented by input from several of the clever friends, both before and after the formal peer review. As both authors revealed in interview, the “Television” chapter was originally planned as a longer chapter entitled “Media”, which also encompassed material that would eventually appear in the separate “Radio” chapter. The creation of the chapter proved the most “uncomfortable” during the co-authorship process. A colleague’s feedback at this early stage compounded the sense that the chapter was not working, leading to a “conflictual, conceptual, intellectual challenge” to the writing partnership. Following this feedback, they rethought the “Media” chapter, and separated it out into two, a move which was “so liberating”, as Rehberg Sedo related in interview (2017). In 2010, Fuller and Rehberg Sedo then sent this chapter out to clever friends 1 and 5 once it was redrafted as “Television”, and in advance of preparing it as part of the submission which went to publishers. Clever friend 2 commented on a subsequent revision, urging them to “tell this story” [of the Richard and Judy Book Club] before “wading into Bourdieu”, comments which foregrounded the areas that the peer reviewers would comment upon (Clever friend document, 2010). Clever friend 2 also suggested a structure for

the chapter which would enable the two authors to foreground their data and argument, while nonetheless articulating it within the conceptual framework – the “dance of distinction” and “book talk remediated” that the chapter addresses. Subsequent to the peer reviews of 2011, and prior to the final submission of the manuscript in 2012, the authors sought additional feedback from clever friends 2-4 who read the manuscript in its entirety. Clever friend 6 then read the “Television” chapter shortly before submission, to ensure the authors “hadn’t mangled British TV history” (Fuller Interview, 2017).

The textual reworkings of the chapter, alongside the conversations held in track changes and comment boxes between the co-authors and clever friends, provide evidence of shifts in emphasis and structure. The feedback from the clever friends and the peer reviewers is largely in accordance, but the commentary from the clever friends offered feedback at multiple stages during the chapter’s life, and – as well as at the macro level of the overall structure and argument and its market potential – at the granular level of the sentence and paragraph. The clever friend process supplemented the formal peer review process by testing the book’s development. These early and frequent challenges lent to the co-authors’ attempts to make their work as strong as they could, through a multi-layered, DIY review process.

The drive to make the book as “robust” as possible by bringing in a wider community to an informal peer review process was also, explicitly, a way of compensating for a lack of editorial input during the publishing process itself. As Fuller commented, she thought that “we’re not going to get that sort of editorial intervention so we’re going to have to find if for ourselves” (Fuller Interview, 2017). Indeed, the process the book followed beyond its formal peer review with the publisher confirms this: although contracted only on a partial submission, no critical read-through was initiated by the publishers after submission of the full text of the book. It could be argued that the publisher trusted the peer reviewers’ comments that the authors were “suitably qualified for this project”, and that the authors would deliver a full-text that lived up to that promise. A small survey we carried out of Arts and Humanities scholars and their recent experience of monograph publishing showed this experience to be not untypical: while some authors had their full manuscripts sent back to peer reviewers, others did not, and the review process at this stage of the publication process seems very limited, if present at all.

Co-Authorship

This article turns finally, and in conclusion, to address directly the question of co-authorship of scholarly work, and its relationship to peer review processes, whether formal or informal. As stated earlier, co-authored monographs are atypical in the Arts & Humanities, and so *Reading Beyond the Book's* dual authorship immediately makes it more collaborative than a typical monograph. In both their interviews with us, the authors gave insight into their co-writing processes, from the initial conception of the shape of the book, with its one-word chapters which fused comparative data from across their research sites and their three continents, to their allocation of “lead” authors for each chapter, and their editing and redrafting of each other’s work. It is perhaps this initial openness to co-writing, developed through the various non-linear processes analysed earlier, that formed a mindset in the authors which was particularly open to others’ thinking. The authors actively sought constructive critique and feedback, and iteratively incorporated each other’s, and their wider communities and networks’ commentaries, into their ongoing drafting process. Their choice to supplement traditional editorial and peer review processes with their set of mentors and clever friends substantially enlarged the editorial process, enabling a peer-to-peer feedback which was not mediated by the publisher.

Bryant comments on the fluidity of text addresses collaboration and its role in textual change, arguing that:

Most collaboration derives from conflicts. Indeed, a major cause of textual fluidity derives from the conflicting sensibilities of collaborators, both friendly and adversarial. Collaborators act primarily as "second readers," the first reader being the writer writing. That is, these second readers take a writer's work and provide new perspectives by suggesting changes; in some cases, they demand changes. (2002: 7)

Fuller and Rehberg’s proactive seeking out of ““second readers”” – including each other as co-authors – attempts to make a virtue of collaboration, “new perspectives”, and the reconciliation of “conflicting sensibilities” through the strengthening of the published text. Pithouse et al. (2009), in a chapter analysing how a symposium turned into the edited volume in which their chapter was published, described their process of “constructive peer feedback”

(intentionally not peer review, which they state “can have rather intimidating connotations” (2009: 31)). That peer feedback saw authors of chapters and the volume editors contribute to feedback on various of the chapters, a process that was welcomed by the scholars. Pithouse et al. contextualise their work on the volume in terms of collaborative scholarship, and the gains and occasional obstacles of the multi-author model common in the sciences moves to the social sciences and the Arts & Humanities. Those obstacles include those coming from institutions and research rankings such as REF, and more broadly, “troublesome issues of decision-making and authority, power, and control do not evaporate in the face of ideological commitment to participatory, dialogic, and interactive practice” (2009: 31).

The DIY process that Fuller and Rehberg Sedo put in place for *Reading Beyond the Book* has its echoes in Pithouse et al.’s “constructive peer feedback”, building purposefully on networks of peers, mentors and co-writers. In Fuller and Rehberg Sedo’s case, there was an evident adherence to institutional and ranking frameworks, not least in agreeing (based on the guidance of a senior university colleagues, as mentioned earlier), to contract their book with one publisher rather than another based on the pressure of REF-publication cycles. The informal peer review process they set in process was created at least in part to mitigate against this decision (although the incorporation of clever friends into the editorial process predated it). As Rehberg Sedo commented in interview, both authors had an awareness that publishers were operating in an age of industry change and the “downsizing of big houses”, in which they were unlikely to have “close feedback or editorial help”, as also identified by Schatz (Rehberg Sedo Interview, 2017). Indeed, Fuller and Rehberg Sedo’s concerted efforts to make their book – and the larger research project of which it was a part – “participatory, dialogic, and interactive”, in Pithouse et al.’s words, had to negotiate continually with pragmatic considerations of clever friend availability, publishers’ commissioning practices, their own early- to mid- career status, and pressures to deliver from their respective institutions and funder.

Some of the literature of peer review terms it a form of “co-authorship”. Such a designation is perhaps the ultimate conclusion of “participatory, dialogic, and interactive” peer feedback and review processes. It is evident that at the very least *Reading Beyond the Book* was substantially shaped by scholars beyond its named authors. Brewis’s (in press 2017) study of peer review in the field of management and organisation studies demonstrates that peer review as co-authorship is seen in negative as well as positive ways, however. Peer review,

she argues, is a “process whereby the authorship of published journal papers often becomes collective because reviewers – and editors – play a major role in their development” (in press 2017: 2). Through a series of interviews with colleagues who operate as authors, reviewers, and editors, she identifies several aspects of the co-authorship of [formal] peer review: “as generous gift, professional duty, reproducing [disciplinary] orthodoxy, ensuring ethnocentric exclusion, perpetuating disciplinary cliques, creating ‘pantomime horse’ papers, constituting excessive interference with authorial privilege or over-reliance on one’s reviewers” (in press 2017: 16-7). The negative aspects that Brewis refers to in the formal peer review process are those typically seen in accounts of peer review: that it constitutes unpaid labour which is rarely valued by universities in workload allocation or career advancement models. (Peer review of monographs, however, can often token honorariums in terms of small amounts of money or free books from the publishers list.) Indeed, the anonymity of traditional peer review occludes the contributions scholars make to the advancement of their disciplines. The offer of *Reading Beyond the Book*’s peer reviewer 2 to “discuss its development further with both authors” was a moment at which one reviewer could step beyond anonymity and into a more fully dialogic role (peer reviewer 2 report).

What might have been seen as a potential pitfall by Fuller and Rehberg Sedo – the lack of an editorial input from a publisher – meant that they were also, arguably, not subject to having to transform their work in ways they were unhappy with, either to make it risk-averse (“vanilla pudding”, in Ashforth (2005)’s terminology) or to incorporate all reviews and therefore construct a “pantomime horse” of a output (Brewis, in press 2017). As such, Brewis’s conclusion that as scholars we should “therefore ask ourselves questions about when, why and how we collaborate with each other” (in press 2017: 17) was enacted by Fuller and Rehberg Sedo, who through their DIY reviews effectively took control of the process. Nonetheless, they were still reliant on the need to find a publisher to agree to publication.

Is it ever possible to write a scholarly monograph without working collaboratively? The case study of *Reading Beyond the Book*, as Figure 2 depicts, was a particularly complicated non-linear process that actively drew on multiple collaborators, creating a multi-layered interplay of publications, documents, events and people. And yet it is unlikely that any substantial research project will ever appear in isolation, due to the early presentation of work in the form of conference papers, journal articles, and grant applications. All monographs do, to a degree, follow the collaborative and networked pathways of *Reading Beyond the Book*. What

the case study demonstrates beyond this truism, though, perhaps reflects more broadly on the state of monograph publishing (and the pressures on scholarly publishers), caught as it is between the demands of institutional pressures and career progression, the marketplace, and the intellectual development of individuals and their inter/disciplines. A recognition of these demands, and active decision-making based on it, is therefore imperative for scholars, both in terms of finding ways to develop our work to its best potential, but also in terms of understanding and interrogating modes of scholarly communication. The study of one particular “exploded book” offers potential insights into how research is valued, in market, career, and intellectual terms. Our reading of *Reading Beyond the Book* questions the overwhelming emphasis on research-as-outcome (or indeed research-as-impact, in REF terms), and instead points towards the value of analysing the collaborative, iterative and non-linear scholarly endeavour underpinning research-as-process. Textual scholarship and STS approaches to knowledge construction in the Arts and Humanities affirm the significance of monograph peer review in a wider network of informal scholarly communications.

Funding

This article was completed with the assistance of a mini-project grant from the AHRC/British Library Academic Book of the Future project.

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