Promoting Interactions and Engagement with Scholarly Research: Speculations on the Role of the Librarian in Advancing Experimental Publishing

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Abstract

This essay reflects on the role librarians and Library and Information Science (LIS) curricula can play in promoting experimental publishing and in nurturing and facilitating interactions with openly available books. It outlines research conducted for the Community-led Open Publication Infrastructures for Monographs (COPIM) and Open Book Futures projects, which mapped the different kinds of experimental (book) publishing currently taking place—including information about the (open source) tools, resources, software, best practices and guidelines for experimental publishing presently available—in response to a professed need of publishers and academics to experiment more with the format of scholarly publications. Experiments with open, multimodal, processual, and more bibliodiverse forms of publishing question how the hegemonic scholarly communications system is currently set up. What does this imply for the role of the librarian within scholarly communications? This essay positions the support of and facilitation of experimental publishing as an extension of the traditional role of librarians to promote interactions and engagement with research (with librarians playing a key role in community building), while also lining up with growing demands from libraries and faculties for scholarly communication services, and library efforts to promote social justice, decolonisation, and excluded and indigenous knowledges. Furthermore, it reflects on the growth of libraries as publishers, and the important role library presses have played in promoting open access and innovative forms of publishing. Finally, this essay describes one of the outcomes of the COPIM project, the Experimental Publishing Compendium, and outlines how it could be used as a resource in LIS curricula.

Keywords: experimental publishing, library publishing, scholarly communications, open access, bibliodiversity

Introduction

The academic publishing system up to the present day continues to be largely structured according to a print-paradigm (Adema, 2021). Even though scholarly research outputs are now mostly available digitally (too) and the ways they are distributed and accessed has fundamentally changed, their appearance and how scholars interact with them continues to mirror print publications. Especially in the humanities and social sciences, research outputs are predominantly shared in either fixed and stable print formats (e.g., books and journals) or as stable online PDFs. At the same time, the move to digital publishing, and the specific opportunities the digital holds for the various different ways in which scholars can potentially communicate their research, has led to an increased need and interest from the side of both publishers and authors to publish more experimental, multimodal, and processual forms of research (Adema, 2021; Arbuckle, 2019; Ball & Eyman, 2015; Christie, 2014; Cullen & Bell, 2018; Maxwell, 2015). Over the last 5 years research has been conducted within the COPIM and Open Book Futures projects on the state of experimental book publishing in the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, situating it within the wider field of academic publishing, outlining inhibitions to and opportunities for experimental publishing, and promoting it by conducting and supporting various pilot projects and by creating resources for the wider scholarly communications community interested in experimental (book) publishing.[1] This research mapped and provided an overview of the different kinds and forms of experimental (book) publishing currently taking place, to promote and give visibility to the rich and diverse forms of digital, multimodal, and interactive scholarship out there, and to help and inspire other presses and authors to conduct similar experiments themselves (Adema et al., 2021, 2022). In addition to that information was collected about the (open source) tools, resources, software, best practices and guidelines for experimental publishing currently available, to close the gap between the need of publishers and academics to experiment more with the format of scholarly publications, and the expertise, skill sets, tools and technologies, and funding they have to actually do so (Adema & Stone, 2017a, 2017b).

Research problem

The research conducted as part of the COPIM project focused mostly on promoting experimental publishing amongst publishers and authors, and on raising awareness of and establishing connections between these actors and the open source tools, platforms, and software providers that facilitate more experimental forms of publishing. In this essay I would like to expand this research by exploring what role librarians[2] can play in experimental

[1] The COPIM (2019-2023) and Open Book Futures (2023-2026) projects consist of international partnerships of researchers, universities, librarians, open access publishers and infrastructure providers, building community-owned, open systems and infrastructures to enable open access book publishing to flourish.

[2] Throughout this essay I use “librarian” as an inclusive definition covering any individual whose roles contain

(book) publishing and how they can be (and often already are) key stakeholders in promoting more experimental forms of publishing and in nurturing and facilitating interactions with openly available books.

Objective and methodology

In the next part, based on a literature review and analysis, I will first outline how the COPIM research has perceived and situated experimental publishing. This includes insights on how open access publishing opens up scholarship, but can also provide novel ways for scholars to interact with books. Some of the more common kinds of interaction that open access books afford that were identified include *annotating, open peer review, remix and reuse, social scholarship*, and other *emergent practices* (including versioning), but it could also take the form of creating communities and conversations around books (Adema et al., 2021). In the second part of this essay, I will then turn to the opportunities for academic libraries to become more involved in promoting and supporting experimental publishing and in nurturing and facilitating interactions with openly available books. I will argue that this activity can be seen as an extension of the traditional roles of librarians to promote interactions and engagement with research as well as with their expanded focus on scholarly communication services, how it lines up with their efforts towards epistemic and social justice and the decolonisation of libraries, and how it extends the key role played by libraries as publishers in promoting open access and innovative forms of publishing. I will end this essay by looking in specific at a resource that could be explored within Library and Information Science (LIS) curricula to help prepare for this extended role for librarians.

Literature review

As the COPIM research and several of its pilot projects attest, experimental publishing can take a myriad of forms and modalities and can incorporate any format or medium (Adema et al., 2021, 2022; Kiesewetter, 2023). Crucially, what experimental publishing does (more than with it is) is examine, question, critique, and explore established publishing practices, workflows, and models that are often the outcome of solidified print- and codex-based publishing conventions and neo-colonial and commercial hegemonies in academic publishing and knowledge production.

Experimental forms of publishing tend to challenge the dominance of print-based processes within conventional forms of academic publishing (as being natural and the most suitable for all forms of research), and question models and relationalities of

responsibilities for library work regardless of job title or qualification. Thanks to Simon Bowie for highlighting this distinction to me.

knowledge production that simply reproduce humanist, neoliberal, and epistemic legacy systems, which are often taken for granted or repeated uncritically. But experimental forms of publishing also speculate on the future of the book, of the humanities, and of academic publishing, providing imaginaries for new and innovative ways to communicate and disseminate research findings and to create communities around them. This includes reimagining the relationalities that constitute academic writing, research, and publishing, rethinking what research, scholarly communication and publishing are or do, and how they are currently organised to support the needs of specific stakeholders. In this way, beyond critiquing and examining the forms, structures, and systems that underlie established and hegemonic systems of scholarly communication—including the dominance of commercial and monopolistic publishing companies, which promote a system shaped by and accommodating and serving mainly publishers, academic institutions, and scholars in the Global North—experimental publishing as a practice and imaginary has also always been about reperforming and reimagining these. It does so among others by working towards publishing formats and relations that are more equitable and might better suit the diverse forms of humanities research while supporting the conversations and interactions around it.

To make this more concrete, let me provide some examples of what experimental publishing can be (without wanting to fix it down).[3] It includes experiments with the form and format of the scholarly book (e.g., with different lengths such as minigraphs, with processual or ongoing forms of publishing, and with different styles of academic writing that are more creative or poetic); with the various (multi)media through which books can be performed (incorporating anything from video, sound, and images to comics and animations); and with the ways in which scholarship can be produced, shared, and consumed (e.g., experiments with anonymous and collaborative authorship and with more interactive forms of research), as well as reviewed (e.g., open peer review experiments), reused, and interacted with (e.g., experiments in licensing, with hypertext, and computational books). But it also includes experiments that reimagine the relationalities that constitute and the political-economy that underlies academic writing, research, and publishing, that want to rethink what research, scholarly communication and publishing are or do, and how they are currently organised (e.g., by experimenting with new publishing models or by rethinking the roles of publishers, authors, developers, designers and technological agency in experimental publishing, exploring different workflows, tools, systems, and infrastructures).

[3] This to acknowledge the "irreducible plurality of academic publishing" (Kivistö & Pihlström, 2015, p. 4) and to provide space for speculative, emergent, and experimental forms of publishing to intervene in and keep open the politics of knowledge production—beyond ongoing institutionalising measures to close it down again (Adema & Hall, 2013; Drucker, 2004; Kember, 2014).

Experimental publishing projects and publications often lack a clear market-appeal. Similar to what Ortega argues with respect to the publishing of print-digital hybrids, many experiments are also one-offs and are non-scalable (as commercial models). These kinds of experiments "persist at the margins of large scale commercial publishing" (Ortega, 2020) and as such experimental publications are mainly supported and initiated by small, independent, not-for-profit (often scholar-led and institutional) publishing ventures (which themselves can be seen as experiments in more ethical and bibliodiverse forms of publishing). New modes of scholarship and publishing have taken advantage of the opportunities the digital medium offers and have relied heavily on the open availability of publications, data, and research findings. Yet digital works as such are not necessarily experimental (e.g. when digital publications simply mimic print forms and workflows) and the open availability of a work doesn't make it experimental or open for further experimentation and reuse (due to copyright licenses, platform-enclosures, and other technological, social, and cultural barriers). See for example the adoption of open access models by commercial and legacy publishers, often using their own proprietary platforms and "open" licenses (placing restrictions on certain forms of (data) sharing, mining, and reuse). To support and promote experimental publishing, and to prevent the further corporate enclosure of both content and infrastructure, it is therefore crucial that publishing software, platforms, and infrastructures are also open (source), not-for-profit, and community-governed. Especially as experimental forms of publishing—in particular those that experiment with multimodal publications and new digital platforms and tools—highlight that content and form are entangled (in other words, our media forms, workflows, and infrastructures are never "neutral") and that tools, technologies, media formats, and platforms are crucial agentic forces that have shaped our scholarly research and publishing practices (Ball & Eyman, 2015; Maxwell et al., 2019; Worthington, 2015).[4]

Crucially in the context of this essay, experimental publishing can also involve a rethinking and reimagining of the roles and relationalities involved in academic publishing (e.g., authorship, ownership, the publishing function) and how we organise knowledge production (e.g., its roles, functions, systems, processes, and workflows). This system has been organised predominantly in a linear way around the publication of fixed, closed, and copyrighted objects and commodities (the book, the article, the journal) and in support of Global North

[4] In line with this, and to emphasise the political and socio-technical nature of publishing tools and infrastructures (Okune et al., 2018), the COPIM research included a mapping exercise of currently available open source software, tools, and platforms for experimental book publishing (Adema et al., 2022). Presses and authors can (in principle) either freely use these tools, technologies, and platforms or further adapt them within their research and publishing workflows. This mapping has been incorporated in the Experimental Publishing Compendium (which I will discuss at the end of this paper), alongside examples of experimental books and experimental publishing practices.

epistemologies and value systems, and liberal humanist authorship functions. Experimental publishing has the potential to question these relationalities, where experimental and multimodal digital works "involve far more complex, non-linear, and iterative processes and require a close collaboration from an early stage of conceptual work" (Mrva-Montoya, 2015, p. 337). This also involves reimagining the role of the publisher and other agencies within our academic institutions (e.g., librarians—as I will discuss in the next section—technologists, editors, designers) as these tend to play a different and often much more involved role in developing digital projects than they do in print ones (Maxwell et al., 2017). Kral and Worthington therefore talk about experimental publishing within the post-digital condition "blurring the distinction between the publishers workflow and the scholars textual creation," which for them also means "an expansion of the very definition what constitutes a publication" (2014).

Findings

Next to changes to the publishing workflow and changing relationships between presses and authors and the other agencies involved in knowledge production, experimental forms of publishing also often involve and promote closer collaborations with other scholars and scholarly communities and the general public. The COPIM research therefore looked closely at projects and publications, as well as technologies and cultural strategies, that promote interactions with and reuse of research. This includes building communities and conversations around content and collections via annotations, comments, and post-publication review (e.g., via the social annotation platform hypothes.is) to enable more collaborative forms of knowledge production, aspects and features that, as I will come back to in the second part of this essay, could enhance more socially just, equitable, and bibliodiverse engagements around texts. The COPIM research identified several types of scholarly interaction around books that open access research affords, including *open annotations, open peer review, remix* and *reuse*, and *open and social scholarship*, alongside several *emergent practices* (including versioning). I will shortly outline some of the opportunities these practices offer to promote interaction and community-forming around books.

Open annotation

Open annotations are readerly or writerly interactions that consists of notes (in any medium) added to open texts (of any medium), which can be likened to a conversation between authors and their audiences (Bertino & Staines, 2019). Although annotation does not come without power relations and workload and reward issues that determine who gets to annotate, as Kalir and Garcia argue, annotation is essential to developing *knowledge communities,* where collaborative annotation can be seen as an important social practice within these communities "to make their research processes more transparent, to participate in peer review, and to communicate with various publics" (2019). Yet annotations can

also facilitate a more "seamless integration of research materials and scholarly analysis" (McPherson, 2010) by more closely linking commentary and the object studied, allow for corrections and updates, enable inline (open) peer review, augmentation of publications with additional (multimedia) information, connections to related resources, further context around citations, opportunities within pedagogical settings, and semantic applications (Bertino & Staines, 2019). Montgomery et al. see annotation as an opportunity to "socialize the process of knowledge creation" by extending the "collaborative spirit" from authorship out to review and revision (2018). Open annotation thus foregrounds social processes of authorship while questioning the nature of authorial authority and the fixity of the published object, pointing to a level of liquidity and intertextuality within a publication (Adema, 2018, p. 72). Next to standalone annotation software, increasingly publishers are accommodating annotation on top of their open collections or on specific open titles, and annotations (either in the authoring environment or the reading environment) are also becoming a standard feature of long-form digital publishing platforms, from CommentPress to Manifold, Scalar, and PubPub.[5]

Open peer review

The digital environment prompts questions about authority in an online setting, while at the same time offering potential opportunities to improve the evaluation and development of scholarship. This has led to various experiments with open peer review or practices that rethink how we conduct quality evaluation of or filter online research content. Open peer review can be facilitated through open annotations, whereby researchers are invited to critique a work published online (pre or post formal publication) on the same online platform using line-by-line commentary. Within the humanities, beyond evaluation, gatekeeping and quality control, review practices have been equally or more focused on constructive and formative review and on community knowledge production (Knöchelmann, 2019). Without disparaging the power relations at work in forms of open peer review, these forms of open dialogue or "community-based authorisation" (2009, p. 128) as Fitzpatrick calls it, could make potential biases and assumptions (in the often secretive and opaque process of blind peer review) more transparent (Eve, 2014, pp. 138–139) and contribute to more equitable and collegiate methods of assessment. Open peer review also offers improved options for the evaluation of digital scholarship, which requires a reassessment of our common linear publishing and evaluation workflows, particularly because digital

[5] CommentPress: https://futureofthebook.org/commentpress/

Manifold: https://manifoldapp.org/

Scalar: https://scalar.me/anvc/scalar/

PubPub: https://www.pubpub.org/

scholarship is "often collaborative," "rarely finished," and "frequently public" (Risam, 2014).[6]

Remix and reuse

Remix and reuse lie at the basis of the research and writing process as scholars build upon the writing, works, and arguments of others when they cite, reference, critique, analyse and reuse existing sources, making "derived use" fundamental to how scholarship progresses. Remix in academia is known under different names, from adaptation and appropriation to open licensing, capturing modifications, derivatives, fair use, and transformative uses of texts, data, and resources. In academic publishing it can include republications, translations, and the adaptation of books to new media (e.g., audiobooks) as well as the incorporation or mixing and sampling of different forms of media content (e.g., texts and images or videos), including those derived through data mining or reuse (to create visualisations or media libraries or to adapt graphs, images, or diagrams). Digital technologies afford the opportunity to reuse publications in different ways, yet this relies on research being openly licensed to enable reuse, e.g., via Creative Commons licenses that allow (commercial) reuse or derivatives within academic publishing, or in an open education context via *Open Educational Resources* (OER) licensed to be freely available for reuse by others. More experimental practices include those in which open texts, images, or videos (e.g., vidding) are cut or mashed up, or allow audiences to do so, as a form of critical engagement with the source texts or to promote more equitable and collaborative forms of knowledge production. Scholars also experiment with reuse and remix as a critical practice *to challenge* existing liberal humanist copyright regimes and established ways of doing and publishing research and the connotations of individual authorship, originality, and ownership that comes with this.

In the context of indigenous or community knowledge, reuse needs to be handled ethically and with care, where "questions of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP) of intellectual property and cultural materials are key considerations for Indigenous communities, who since the time of contact with settler populations have seen their cultural content stolen, misappropriated, and misrepresented" (Cullen & Bell, 2018, p. 199). Yet indigenous and traditional knowledge is often audio-visual and, as Cullen and Bell state, there is a pressing need here "for a different kind of publishing, both for collaborative authorship and for more flexible, interactive publications" (2018, p. 198). Several experimental publishing projects and practices have been exploring how to make

[6] For example, common linear publishing and evaluation workflows might need to be adapted to accommodate versioned and processual books, which would involve less assessment, validation, or gatekeeping, and more feedback or continual review at different points of the research process to roll into the digital project's next phase.

traditional and indigenous knowledge accessible and reusable while accommodating its cultural and access protocols, which determine if and how that knowledge can be (re) used and circulated, by whom, and under which conditions (Christen, 2012), e.g., by co-designing contracts with indigenous communities and by using open licensing such as Traditional Knowledge Licenses (Okune et al., 2018).

Open and social scholarship

One key reason to publish openly is to improve engagement with research and make connections to related scholarship. Opening up scholarship should therefore involve making sure that publications are networked more directly and that conversations around scholarship can arise across disciplines, including the general public. How then can we facilitate "social knowledge creation, public engagement, and broad collaboration" in a move from open access to open, social scholarship, or scholarship that is more socially engaged (Arbuckle, 2019)? Social media and Social Research Sharing Networks have been very influential in this context to increase social interactions and conversations around research (making connections to publications via hyperlinks and tags), as has the increased open and networked state of our knowledge, which has enabled us to create communities around our scholarship (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Hyde, 2016; McHardy, 2021). As Maxwell argues in this respect "publication is not making things available to a pre-existing public; it is the very constitution or gathering of that public". In this respect, there is a need to locate and situate research within the social network and to "re-inscribe the relation between works, publications, and discourse more broadly" (2015).

Versioning and processual publishing

Versioning, also known as processual, iterative, or continuous publishing, was pioneered within science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields with the use of preprints and postprints. As used within research and publishing, it "refers to the frequent updating, rewriting, or modification of academic material that has been published in a formal or informal way" and has affinity with software development, where it refers to the various instalments of a piece of software (Adema, 2021, p. 21). Increasingly open publishing platforms in the humanities have started to incorporate versioning and options to update and revise works. PubPub and Manifold are two key examples here of platforms that allow material (text, data, sound, video) to be added to a publication as it progresses or is iteratively published. With the possibility to keep changelogs and previous versions available, the modifications, interactions, comments, annotations, and updates to publications can become more visible, which offers possibilities to highlight the co-creation of and engagement with scholarship.

Discussion

The above-mentioned examples of experimental publishing and experimental publishing practices make us rethink how scholarly communication and publishing is currently set up, organised, and conducted, while offering imaginaries for more ethical and bibliodiverse forms of publishing and for increased interaction with and collaboration around research. In this next section I want to do two things. First of all, I want to reflect on the role librarians and LIS curricula can play in promoting experimental publishing and in nurturing and facilitating interactions with openly available books. I will do so by positioning this activity as an extension of the traditional role of librarians to promote interactions and engagement with research, and as something that lines up with the increased focus on scholarly communications services within libraries. Promoting interaction and engagement with research can be seen as essential to improving access and accessibility of research, to the creation of communities around research, and to the advancement of social and epistemic justice. Secondly, I will reflect on the growth of libraries as publishers, and the key role library presses have played in promoting open access and innovative forms of publishing.

To do so, I will build on an article in the *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication*, in which Jaya Raju reflects on the relationship between the scholarly communications field and university libraries and LIS education in South Africa and on the African continent. Raju concludes that library professionals, as well as the LIS education curriculum, need to take steps to more fully embrace and adapt to this evolving and emerging field "in an age where scholarly communication has proliferated in academic library services" (2019, p. 2) and "technology advancement such as digitization has revolutionized the scholarly communication system" (2019, p. 5). Following Raju, I want to argue that librarians and the LIS education curriculum can play a key role in two aspects of scholarly communications in specific, namely in promoting experimental publishing and in nurturing and facilitating interactions with openly available books.[7]

Extending the roles of librarians

Jaya Raju's analysis of the competency and services expectations listed in job advertisements by university library employers in South Africa, clearly evidences how the roles of librarians are changing and expanding to include a significant presence of scholarly communication requirements (2019, p. 20). Kenney, in a United States (US) context, similarly sees the

[7] At the same time experimental publishing can be seen to complicate some of our common understandings (including several of the scholarly communication models which Jaya Raju cites in her article) of what scholarly communication is or does and the functions it fulfils, where these models focus mostly on research as fixed and static outputs, a linear development from research to published outputs, and a clear division between research and publishing. There is also a lack of focus in these models on the agency of the material infrastructures and digital tools used within knowledge production.

expansion of librarians' roles to include scholarly communication services as "a natural extension of efforts to embrace a full spectrum of services from creation to curation" (2015, p. 386), while Walker, in a United Kingdom (UK) context, talks about librarians offering more holistic open research support services with support across the research cycle (2020, p. 8). Norris et al. highlight that scholarly communication has "always been integral to the services and resources available through libraries and facilitated by information specialists" (2020, p. 268), which is further supported by Lippincott, who outlines how libraries have been shifting their roles on campus by leveraging their existing skill sets and infrastructures to support scholarly communication needs driven by campus demand (2016, p. 186). She points out how these demands alongside technological developments means that librarians need to rethink their role within knowledge production, positioning them as "active partners in the creation and dissemination of research" (Lippincott, 2017, p. 3).

Jaya Raju similarly highlights that advancing digital technologies have accentuated the more active support and contribution of librarians to knowledge production in more recent years (2019, p. 20). As she concludes however (based on her research in South Africa, but she shows how this is part of a global trend), these changes in the roles of librarians notwithstanding, and even though universities in South Africa are "actively embracing new and emerging trends in scholarly communication" (J. Raju, 2019, p. 22), LIS curricula are not keeping up. An expansion of training is needed to address a knowledge and skills gap and a slowness to adapt to the needs of university libraries, while these themselves will need to respond to this skills gap "by using continuous professional development opportunities to redefine existing positions and reskill for new roles" (J. Raju, 2019, p. 22).

Experimental publishing expertise is a core skill in this context, as it draws on and extends existing skill sets and roles of librarians (especially of liaison and scholarly communications librarians, as I will discuss next), but also in how it questions what scholarly communication is and does, and what these established roles are. Reassessing what scholarly communication is and can be, towards more communal forms of knowledge production that are more interactive, processual, and collaborative, might pave the way for more ethical and locally relevant forms of research, while at the same time posing opportunities for librarians to be more strongly embedded within knowledge production and to help researchers think through how to best share their research.

For example, as Norris et al. outline, liaison librarians would be well positioned to incorporate additional scholarly communication roles, as their depth of knowledge in a particular subject area and the potential to provide subject-specific (instead of generalised) examples provides valuable context when discussing scholarly communication topics with faculty. As they explain, "liaison librarians work to build strong relationships with

faculty and students in their respective subject areas. These relationships help provide opportunities for continued engagement and facilitate critical conversations about scholarly communication" (2020, p. 272). Kenney reminds us in this context how liaisonship is all about library relationship building and engagement and this might involve actively advancing new scholarly practices (2015, p. 389). Kenney outlines how this could add to the movement within many US libraries from a collections-centric to an engagement-centred model of librarianship, with the library functioning as a "critical component in the scholarly communications infrastructure" (2015, p. 386). Norris et al. further see the emerging role of scholarly communications librarians and library units as a particularly important trend while simultaneously "liaison librarians have seen an increased emphasis on scholarly communication in their position descriptions and areas of responsibility" (2020, p. 270). Even more, Norris et al. argue scholarly communication has always been at the centre of library services and resources, while liaison librarians have been "engaging in outreach and have been providing support on such topics well before it was an identified area of responsibility" (2020, p. 280). While we should be mindful of expectations and responsibilities, workload, and existing expertise, there are thus clear opportunities, they state, for liaison librarians to engage with and incorporate scholarly communication activities and to collaborate with scholarly communication librarians and other units at their institutions. Stapleton echoes this, especially in relation to how liaison librarians can collaborate with publishing service teams at libraries to respond to publishing enquiries (2019, p. 22).

Advancing social and epistemic justice

Next to fitting in well with changing demands on libraries to support the scholarly communications needs of their faculty by adapting and extending roles and services, experimental publishing can be seen to line up with some of the key missions and values of academic libraries to decolonise knowledge and to support bibliodiversity. For one, experimental publishing and increased interactions with and around open books can potentially further promote the advancement of social justice and epistemic equity. As Reggie Raju et al. describe it, social and cognitive justice involves the dismantling of structures that perpetuate exclusion, inequality, and inequities within the research and publishing landscape in scholarly communication by both examining and critiquing them and by developing alternatives to them "that contribute to the promotion of equity, inclusion and diversity" (2023, pp. 2–3). This is very much in line with how experimental publishing or publications, as I have described in the previous section, set out to both critique and reperform our hegemonic, humanist, and universalist knowledge systems, to both expose biases in this system and to promote its diversification.

Chan et al. outline how cognitive justice can line up with an extended vision of open science (beyond open access), which involves an openness or an opening up to excluded forms of knowledge by including more ways of knowing, providing equitable access to scholarly literature, opening research up to society and social movements, enabling open access to both research and data, and promoting more bibliodiverse publishing options, amongst others (2020, p. 10). These marginalised and indigenous knowledges have been excluded from conventional science and similarly the notion of collective rights in knowledge they put forward has been overlooked, also within the mainstream open access debate, where this, as Chan et al. state, complicates (Western) conceptions of openness (2020, p. 9). These knowledges often suffer from exploitative research relationships, where Albornoz et al. describe how guides and tools, safeguards and governance structures to protect indigenous peoples rights and sovereignty are crucial, in an attempt to explore how "we can create systems in which we may open up and simultaneously protect the knowledge of vulnerable populations" (2020, p. 69). Publishing experiments with new forms of licensing for (open access) books in relation to indigenous forms of knowledge (e.g., Traditional Knowledge Licenses), can help protect and implement OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, Possession) principles in relation to data and knowledge sharing. Similarly, experimental publishing platforms such as Mukurtu (a digital anthropological platform) have been developed to better support and implement this. Overall, experiments with open peer review, collaborative authorship and knowledge production, and increased community interactions around books, can contribute to the considerations or recommendations made by Chan et al. to support participatory research or the co-creation of knowledge for and with communities as an extension of or broadening out of openness, beyond open access to principles of "fair and decolonial open science" (2020, p. 11).

Experiments with new forms of licensing enabling different types of interaction around knowledge and data, could be an important step towards more situated forms of openness (Albornoz et al., 2020, p. 67) in this context and practices of critical (Drabinsky, 2019) or "progressive" librarianship—as Mutonga and Okune position it using the concept developed by Shiraz Durrani—could play a valuable part in this. Mutonga and Okune see a significant role for progressive librarianship in attempts to decolonise libraries in ways that avoid getting caught in a culture of "forget and move on" (2021, p. 190). Therefore for them, decolonising libraries in a move towards epistemic justice means not only addressing the legacies of colonialism, but also (following historian Robin Kelley's study of the alternative visions of freedom held by various black radical movements) (re) collecting radical collaborative imaginings of alternative futures, amongst others by setting up more just and equitable knowledge infrastructures that provide space for "archiving and sharing histories of resistance and subversive politics" (Mutonga & Okune, 2021, p. 197). Ensuring the right technical infrastructure exists to provide the contextual critical

commentary and metadata connected to these artefacts is crucial, they state—and experimental forms of publishing could assist librarians with exploring how this could be best presented and preserved. Community-owned and controlled knowledge infrastructures are key, they argue, instead of leaving the curation of one's national memory to commercial and external foreign partners: infrastructuring is essential to decolonisation, where "the question of decolonising knowledge, then, is also one of decoupling from infrastructures owned by private Euro-American corporations" (Mutonga & Okune, 2021, pp. 206–207).

Mboa Nkoudou points out that another important move to combat the coloniality of knowledge, especially in an African context, relates to how African researchers struggle to share local scientific productions due to the lack of local green and gold OA options, where local epistemologies are often replaced by Western paradigms used to describe local realities in a process of epistemic alienation (2020, p. 32). Open access only accentuates this problem, he states, as it makes Global North publications more visible and increases interactions with them. As such, as Albornoz et al. state, it "can amplify the overrepresentation of knowledge produced by Northern actors and institutions and further the exclusion of knowledge produced by marginalized groups," i.e., open research practices may replicate epistemic injustices (2020, p. 65). Reggie Raju and Badrudeen argue in this context for the importance of "an African research agenda shaped by local challenges in the quest for equity and inclusion," decolonisation of the scholarly ecosystem, and a nurturing of the next generation of African researchers (2022, pp. 52–53). What is needed to achieve this is inclusive participation by Global South researchers in knowledge creation and "open access practices and policies that enhance sharing of African scholarly output for the generation of new knowledge for use by Africa and the rest of the world" (R. Raju & Badrudeen, 2022, p. 53). Mboa Nkoudou argues for a two-fold approach to "decolonize the way of thinking and redesign OA to make it more relevant to the African context," which involves facilitating and promoting the creation of more socially relevant and situated knowledge in a local context (2020, pp. 35–36). Crucially, and in line with what I have argued above in relation to experimental publishing questioning the use of fixed and stable book objects as the best way to share research ideas in all circumstances, Mboa Nkoudou argues that in this context we should explore alternative ways to communicate research "aside from a traditional, published journal article". This, because "African scientific knowledge is mostly found in the grey literature (theses, dissertations, and research reports)" which are rarely online or freely accessible and invisible in Northern databases (Mboa Nkoudou, 2020, p. 36). Additionally, Mboa Nkoudou points out "that younger scientists are using blogs and wikis for collaborative research development rather than the more competitive mode of research production to which older researchers are accustomed" (2020, p. 37). Reggie Raju and Badrudeen similarly argue in this respect how bias in scholarly communication is also about what is accepted in form, e.g., see Global North

journals which (quoting Kwasi Boahene) “serve a particular purpose and audience and, therefore, select researchers and research writings that fit that perspective” (2022, p. 54).

Libraries as publishers

One of the main changes to the role played by libraries in a context of digital scholarly communications has been the growth of libraries as publishers over the last decades, and, as part of this development, the key role library presses have played in promoting open access and innovative forms of publishing (Lippincott, 2016; R. Raju & Pietersen, 2017). Likewise, experimental forms of publishing (e.g., more processual forms of publication) are breaking down traditional demarcations between research and publishing and with that are questioning the roles of researchers, publishers, and editors. What does this imply for the role and function of the library in these changing scholarly communication and publishing models?

Lippincott states that the US Library Publishing Coalition’s (LPC, founded in 2013) definition of library publishing struggles with establishing clear boundaries of what constitutes library publishing. Crucially though, as a publishing model that sits apart from the big commercial presses, university presses, learned society publishing, and/or scholar-led publishing, part of LPC’s definition focuses in on how library publishing has “a preference for Open Access dissemination as well as a willingness to embrace informal and experimental forms of scholarly communication and to challenge the status quo” (Lippincott, 2016, p. 187). Stapleton argues that library publishing supports a more ethical publishing model, beyond profit, where “with institutional or grant financial support, library publishing may be more flexible to develop an ideal publishing model, relatively free from cost recovery and profit motivations” (2019, p. 21). Ma et al. also indicate it “plays an important role in maintaining bibliodiversity by providing venues for research and scholarship overlooked by traditional publishers, especially works in the humanities and humanistic social sciences” (2023, p. 5) and also by ensuring equitable access of local knowledge to students (R. Raju et al., 2023, p. 7).

For many, library publishing, as a move from collecting to publishing or creating content, is seen as a natural extension of the role of the library and librarians as part of its scholarly communication services (J. Raju, 2019, p. 8) and it can be seen as a way to “connect more deeply with faculty” (Kenney, 2015, p. 387). It builds on existing strengths within the library, “leveraging their existing skill sets and infrastructures” including, as Lippincott outlines, “library services aimed at creating and stewarding digital content, such as data curation services and digital scholarship centers” (2017, p. 16), where there is also much technical expertise in libraries (especially in the US) around coding, design, and web publishing, alongside knowledge of the scholarly publishing landscape

and access to and discovery of resources.[8] As Stapleton states, "libraries today are using technology to expand the concept of knowledge management beyond content organisation to provide greater support of the entire publishing lifecycle" (2019, p. 17).

Reggie Raju and Pietersen see libraries as being in a state of revolution, "moving away from being supporters of the research process to being collaborators in that process" and argue for them being more proactive in providing new services in an African context in specific, as library publishing "will contribute positively to African researchers becoming significant contributors to the world's knowledge production" (2017). Library publishing offers opportunities for a "social justice–driven scholarly ecosystem that will be inclusive of African research voices" (R. Raju & Badrudeen, 2022, p. 58), crucial to addressing the systemic inequalities of the Global North-dominated publishing ecosystem and the commercial takeover of open access. It also offers community control of knowledge production and provides "African scholars and researchers unhindered participation (limit bias) in the dissemination of scholarship" (R. Raju et al., 2023, p. 6). For example, library publishing services such as the African Platform for Open Scholarship, a diamond open access publishing alternative developed by the University of Cape Town (UCT), support the publication of open monographs and open textbooks to "meet the need for more local and decolonised content" (R. Raju & Badrudeen, 2022, p. 55).

Library publishing has and can play an important role in promoting experimental publishing, where, as Lippincott outlines, "pushing the boundaries of what is considered publishing may in fact be one of library publishing's greatest strengths (…) libraries explicitly embrace experimental publications, media-rich content, and content that is otherwise neglected" (2017, p. 51). As Lippincott argues, the suite of publishing services library publishers provide are focused predominantly on facilitating content creating and sharing, often utilising a lightweight, lowcost, and agile workflow. This provides them with a lot of flexibility to support alternative open access publishing models as well as the publication of Digital Humanities (DH) work, data, and gray literature.

The lack of support for emerging formats and the integration of multimodal content by legacy publishers still relying on print production requirements, has been an important factor in the development of library publishing: "commercial scholarly publishers and university presses have not provided solutions for publishing vast quantities of significant scholarship in the form

[9] Not all libraries should or can become publishers of course, Lippincott outlines, as it does mean an investment of library resources in times of budget cuts and often involves reallocating staff time. Libraries can also support publishing in different ways, for example through consortial funding of more ethical and bibliodiverse publishing endeavours (2017, pp. 32, 49).

of gray literature, data, learning objects, digital humanities projects, and other nontraditional forms of scholarly and creative output" (Lippincott, 2017, p. 9). This includes support for more "niche and experimental Publications," where Lippinicott argues that library publishers have "found a niche in catering to publications that break the mold," as they embrace "projects with limited readership and unconventional subjects and seek out high-quality content, regardless of its format or the logistical challenges of publication" (2017, p. 12).

Lippincott states that there is an array of formal and informal publications that scholars use to advance discourse, which often lack proper dissemination channels, despite their merit (from blogs to zines and digital scholarship, which often lack "official" metadata markers such as ISBNs).

Here the flexibility and agility to support these publications that library publishers have "without the pressures of generating revenue or increasing efficiency," is crucial, as "for these custom, often highly technical projects, libraries see an advantage in being small and entrepreneurial. Large commercial publishers benefit from economies of scale, but large publishing portfolios can also necessitate standardization and a lack of flexibility" (Lippincott, 2017, p. 13). Lippincott also mentions the technical support from "a fleet of emerging open source platforms'' to support experimental and digital publishing, from Scalar and Manifold, to Vega and Fulcrum (2017, p. 30). In this sense, as she states, libraries are much more flexible to support the dynamic evolving publishing needs of scholars and their "tolerance for experimentation means that new projects can be launched without intensive assessment and planning. New publications can get off the ground with minimal lead time and evolve over time in response to successes and failures" (Lippincott, 2017, p. 14).

Conclusion and recommendations

In this essay I have reflected on different ways in which librarians can promote experimental publishing and nurture and facilitate interactions with openly available books. Connecting this to Jaya Raju's call (2019) for library professionals, as well as the LIS education curriculum, to more fully embrace the changing (digital) scholarly communications needs of faculty as well as demands for increased scholarly communications services within libraries, I similarly made the argument that librarians and LIS curricula are ideally positioned as part of this adaptation, to focus more on promoting experimental publishing and interactions around books.

One resource that I would like to put forward here—which would be particularly useful to include in LIS curricula and professional development courses (alongside inclusion in LibGuides,[9] in course reading lists, in subject guides, and research guides), as it brings together current and up-to date resources, examples, and practices related to experimental publishing—is the Experimental Publishing Compendium. The Compendium (Adema et al., 2023), compiled and maintained by COPIM's Experimental Publishing Group, is a guide and reference for scholars, publishers, developers, librarians, and designers who want to challenge, push, and redefine the shape, form, and rationale of scholarly books. The Compendium is the outcome of an extended and collaborative research process, which has culminated in a practical resource for the academic community to help authors, publishers, and others involved in knowledge production, to get started with experimental, multimodal, and practice-based publishing projects, or to support their faculty or students in doing so. The linked entries in the Compendium inspire speculations on the future of the book and the humanities more generally and encourage publishers and authors to explore publications beyond the standard printed codex format. As a resource and toolkit, the Compendium gathers and links tools, examples of experimental books, and experimental publishing practices with a focus on free and open-source software, platforms, and digital publishing tools that presses and authors can either use freely and/or further adapt themselves to their workflows. The tools, practices, and books listed in the Compendium are linked together, showcasing the relationships between a book and its processes of production and publication, offering an alternative, more associative way to engage with the Compendium. Each experimental book listed in the Compendium is in this way connected to the tools used in its production or presentation and to the experimental publishing practices that relate to this publication or that it embodies. Experimental publishing practices capture ways of interacting with and relating around open and experimental books and include practices such as collaborative writing, annotating, remixing, reviewing, translating, and versioning. Each practice listed in the Compendium is accompanied by a short essay that situates it and how it relates to experimental publishing, highlighting examples of how the practice is or can be experimental and can support experimental publishing. The Compendium acts as a guide for both experienced practitioners and those just setting out to experiment with the forms, content, and practices of scholarly bookmaking, and as such can offer an important resource for librarians to promote and make available to their faculty and (postgraduate) students, and to be included LIS curricula to contribute up-to-date information about available experimental publishing resources, while providing the latest insights into how the scholarly communications system is changing and developing.

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