



Routledge Research in Museum Studies

MUSEUM AND GALLERY PUBLISHING

FROM THEORY TO CASE STUDY

Sarah Anne Hughes



Museum and Gallery Publishing

Museum and Gallery Publishing examines the theory and practice of general and scholarly publishing associated with museum and art gallery collections. Focusing on the production and reception of these texts, the book explains the relevance of publishing to the cultural, commercial and social contexts of collections and their institutions.

Combining theory with case studies from around the world, Sarah Anne Hughes explores how, why and to what effect museums and galleries publish books. Covering a broad range of publishing formats and organisations, including heritage sites, libraries and temporary exhibitions, the book argues that the production and consumption of printed media within the context of collecting institutions occupies a unique and privileged role in the creation and communication of knowledge. Acknowledging that books offer functions beyond communication, Hughes argues that this places books published by museums in a unique relationship to institutions, with staff acting as producers and visitors as consumers. The logistical and ethical dimensions of museum and gallery publishing are also examined in depth, including consideration of issues such as production, the impact of digital technologies, funding and sponsorship, marketing, co-publishing, rights, and curators' and artists' agency.

Focusing on an important but hitherto neglected topic, *Museum and Gallery Publishing* is key reading for researchers in the fields of museum, heritage, art and publishing studies. It will also be of interest to curators and other practitioners working in museums, heritage and science centres and art galleries.

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From Theory to Case Study

Sarah Anne Hughes

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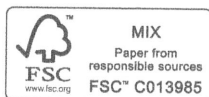
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Foreword

One of the joys about working in museum studies—and something that has helped to maintain my excitement and intellectual curiosity for more than 20 years—is the relatively unbounded, outward-facing and open character of research in the field. Where other academic fields can sometimes seem—at least from the outside—to foster debate between and amongst individuals with shared forms of expertise and deep knowledge of internally coherent disciplinary conventions, museum studies has tended to thrive on engagement with vastly different areas of enquiry. (Certainly, my own research and practice—focused on the museum as an agent of social justice—has benefited over the years from drawing on and seeking to contribute to debates in disciplines ranging from disability studies and queer studies to human rights, politics and philosophy.)

Despite a degree of familiarity with interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches to the field, I was initially surprised when, some years ago, I was first approached to discuss a proposal for an exploration of publishing within museums and galleries. I was uncertain of the need for such a study (*why* exactly was research into museum publishing important?) and unsure how a project might proceed (what research questions might be posed, what conceptual frameworks might be adopted and what cases could be productively explored?).

Of course, as things turned out, my concerns were largely the result of my own ignorance. Despite my years in museums, I knew little about the phenomenon of museum publishing and had given museum books limited attention, and I knew even less about the field of publishing studies. Thankfully, Sarah persisted, making a compelling and creative case for an investigation of museum books—the factors that shaped their production and the different ways in which they were received, consumed, interacted with and valued. I quickly became fascinated with the study and excited about its potential to shine a light on an area of museum practice that, as it turned out, proved to be rich and productive yet sorely overlooked.

Where scholarship around museum exhibitions had proliferated over the previous decade—with numerous studies exploring the processes through which they were made, the narratives they embodied and the ways in which

different audiences engaged with them—the phenomenon of museum publishing had been almost entirely passed over.

Over the years that followed, I learned a huge amount—both about museum publishing itself and also, more broadly, about the potential an analysis of publishing held to look differently at the museum as a site for knowledge, meaning and communication. Over time, I also discovered I could never look at an exhibition catalogue again in quite the same way!

This book invites us all not only to look afresh at the books and associated printed material that museums and galleries publish but to think more critically about how—with what intent and effects—museums seek to express and share their knowledge and use a variety of channels to open up (and potentially delimit) communication with diverse and international audiences. The novel research design, rich case studies and compelling findings produced by this study help to challenge our understanding of books in museums, reframing them as a key feature of the organisation's capacities to confer, convey and assert particular forms of knowledge.

One thing is certain—museum books deserve more attention—and I have no doubt that this richly creative and highly original study will stimulate further research in this under-explored area.

RICHARD SANDELL

October 2018

Preface

This book establishes the contribution made by analogue and digital publishing towards the funding, scholarship, public programmes and audience development of museums and art galleries. Its interdisciplinary theoretical base draws together studies of collections and print culture, while case studies exemplify and celebrate the editorial, production and sales processes involved in publishing books that form an integral feature of the curation of art, heritage and science in our institutions.

The text is a culmination of over 15 years of interest and research into the processes and products of publishing by collections. During these years, trade publishing has responded to a technological revolution. The initial uncertainty that disrupted the status quo in this industry has been largely resolved. Denying early claims that printed books were a thing of the past, the development and dissemination of intellectual property continues with print formats alongside digital delivery, albeit in an uneasy equilibrium. As an enterprise that was and remains intimately connected to the global publishing industry, museum and art gallery publishing has been equally affected by the demands of digital technologies and has adjusted its workflows and its products. These changes are particularly apparent in efforts to meet the remit on institutions to provide public access to collections and the supporting scholarship. Adding to the challenges of digital media are the complexities generated by a contemporary media landscape that offers both print and digital formats which provide opportunities for potentially conflicting demands on publishing. The sale of printed books makes a significant contribution to institutional funding and continues to prove popular with visitors, while free access to collections through web and mobile technologies attracts new and diverse audiences. These dynamic issues and their resolution create a stimulating area for research.

The research informing this text took place initially within the context of graduate studies at the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. The stimulating and supportive research environment generated at this institution was an excellent basis from which to make the first steps in coalescing the academic fields of museums and publishing. I was fortunate to receive investigative access to the publishing activities at The National

Gallery and the Wellcome Collection, both in London. These are institutions where differences and similarities in their approaches to publishing enabled me to build a broad understanding of the issues—both practical and strategic—in developing and running a publishing programme. I was also able to obtain audience responses to the publications, some of which are presented here. This initial study is extended with illustrative cases from institutions in the USA, Singapore, Australia, France and The Netherlands, along with further examples from the UK.

In the course of these investigations, it became apparent that publishing by collecting institutions lacked concerted research attention. This situation is both intriguing and surprising since active research programmes make a profound contribution to the understanding of visitors' experiences and their responses to museum communication. Research in exhibition design and evaluation, public access to collections, visitor studies and audience development are widely reported in the literature. However, these investigations do not usually extend to include consideration of the publications and publishing endeavours associated with collections. It is my hope that this book will call attention to the opportunities for further research in this area for museum professionals and for academics working in the fields of museum and publishing studies.

The last 15 years proved an interesting time for this interdisciplinary study: the next 15 and onwards will likely prove equally rewarding.

Acknowledgements

In 2005, my query as to why museums publish books initiated an AHRC-funded PhD with the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. After completing these studies, I continued to explore the issues raised by this overarching question. This book is a concerted response to the original question. Its development has been shaped by many opportunities and influences.

I am very grateful to Oxford Brookes University for support of my research with travel grants and research leave. Contact with staff of collections outside of the UK was achieved with support for travel and subsistence costs from the British Academy International Partnership and Mobility Scheme in 2013 for travel to Johannesburg and Cape Town and from Santander in 2009 for travel to Madrid to investigate publishing activities at Museo Nacional del Prado, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia and Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum.

The staff at museums, art galleries and publishing companies in Australia, France, Germany, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, the USA and the UK have generously shared the benefits of their experience and insights with me. I am most grateful to the following people who answered questions and corrected my errors:

Janice Adams, Kenneth Arnold, Sophia Austin, Jim Bennett, Robert Dalrymple, Mark Eastment, Kate Forde, Trish Gabroske, Sharon Gallagher, Carolyn Gleason, Coralie Hepburn, Chris Hudson, Charles Kim, Jane Knowles, Jane Lusaka, Sally MacDonald, Kathleen McMillan, Michael Mitchell, Nadine Monem, Rebecca Mutch, Sue Palmer, Richard Pandisco, James Peto, Rebecca Queensland, Louise Rice, Anna Ridley, Christopher Riopelle, Gwen Roginsky, Carolyn Russo, Emily Sargeant, Philip Shaw, Charles Saumarez Smith, Andrea Stevens, Michaela Unterdörfer, Oliver Watson, Alison Watt, Colin Wiggins, Susan Wightman and Claire Young. The unreferenced quotations in the text are from the conversations with these individuals and with museum visitors and readers.

To the readers who answered my online questionnaires and granted me interviews—thank you for considering and answering my queries about your interest in museum books and your reading habits. I am grateful to my

colleagues at Oxford Brookes University for their encouragement. And to the editorial staff at Routledge, thank you for your patience with the inevitable delays in my submissions and your attention to my errors. My thanks go to friends and family for their attention to my progress.

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1 Why museum and art gallery publishing?

Why do museums and art galleries publish books? Exhibitions, public programming and websites offer exciting and innovative ways to communicate with their publics. So, what do books offer that these forms of audience engagement do not? And, what purposes continue to drive the publication of printed materials when collections can now be shared online? This book attempts to answer these and other questions and aims to explain the relevance of publishing to the cultural, commercial and social contexts of collections and their institutions. In the process, a sweep of academic fields will be crossed as the topic is not easily contained by a single disciplinary boundary and touches on book history, literary studies, audience, museum and visitor studies. Communication is essentially the purpose of publishing—that is, the dissemination of intellectual property, and this practice has a long association with museums, art galleries, scientific collections such as natural history museums and botanic gardens, heritage centres and libraries. In the chapters that follow, I consider how, why and to what effect these institutions publish books and offer insights into a topic that has largely been neglected by current research in both print culture and museum studies. I argue that the production and consumption of printed media within the context of collecting institutions occupies a unique and privileged role in the creation and communication of knowledge built by these cultural and scientific entities. Further, it is not only the textual and illustrative content which constitutes this communicative function; the physical form of the book makes an essential contribution to its role in the museum, not least because of its value as a saleable commodity. I argue for printed books as locales where the authority of museums and galleries is made explicit along with the agency of the associated curatorial scholarship. In the uses that visitors acknowledge of their museum books, I locate a willing alignment with the cultural capital of collections.

The absence of any concerted consideration of publishing by museums is surprising given the visibility of books in museum shops, their long history in support of collections and their contribution to communication and audience development for museum visitors. Museum publishing takes place in a complex landscape of agents, commercial influences and cultural

2 Why museum and art gallery publishing?

factors which makes it a potentially rewarding area for investigation with relevance for contemporary museums as well as current publishing. And, museums and art galleries offer a more complex environment than that for commercial publishing. Part of the complexity results from the many different agents, such as curators, directors, artists and sponsors, who affect the production processes. The reception of museum books, that is, their reading, occurs under various institutional influences and to further complicate investigations museums produce many different types of books, including guide books, catalogues—for permanent collections and temporary exhibitions—*catalogues raisonnés*, monographs, technical reports, themed studies, schools' literature, children's books, artists' monographs, apps, e-books, limited editions and facsimiles. Although the kinds of books just cited are the main categories, poetry, fiction, manga and magazines also emanate from collections. There are few museums or art galleries that create all of these, although national institutions in the US and in European countries take a lead in offering books and digital products that address most of the categories. Institutions with smaller collections, more limited budgets or with a regional or local audience offer at least a guidebook and may aspire to occasional additional publications relating to their collections or exhibitions. To further complicate things, museums co-produce books with other institutions, contract out publishing to commercial companies and sell books produced by other publishers as adjuncts to their exhibitions and public programmes.

However complicated the processes underlying the production of museum books, these objects are naturally associated with collections as authentic carriers of information for intellectual consumption and entertainment. The economic contribution of book sales to many institutions is substantial, and it is also as carriers of cultural value that books contribute to collecting institutions. My investigation of museum books recognises that this cultural phenomenon, the book, operates beyond the mere delivery of written language and is consumed for purposes other than reading. It is these many and disparate functions that influence personal responses to reading and to books. Our own histories of reading for entertainment, instruction, relaxation and education affect the ways we respond to and consume books. It is likely that your established reading practices with museum books will inform your response to the ideas set out in the following chapters.

Books offer functions beyond communication as carriers of informational text. I argue that these functions, within the context of museums and art galleries, place books in a unique relationship to the institutions, their staff as producers and their visitors as consumers. Further, the agency and authority of producers in exploiting the intellectual property inherent in collections are made apparent in museum and art gallery books. The longevity of books preserves the authority of this field of study as it is construed and constructed by the curation and research of collecting institutions. In the following chapters, we will see how this authority and the associated

relationships play out to enable producers and consumers to display personal and institutional identities, to mark career progression and to align with the authority associated with collections. My premise is that these uses of the production of museum publishing have to date been overlooked in the study of museum communication and that this area would repay concerted research attention. I also identify benefits to print culture, book history and reader studies from research into the production and reception of museum books. As a commodity, books offer commercial functions through the sale receipts that generate income, and as physical objects, they act as temporal devices such as souvenirs or memorials, as archival or data sources and for reuse or recycling. Some of these features are relevant to both print and museum studies. In fact, the intersection of the disciplines active in the study of museum publishing offers a rich area for study with potential for impact on both fields. For example, a book is an object imbued with plasticity; that is to say, within broad parameters the design and physical features that constitute a book may occur in unlimited combinations. While every book within an edition is identical between titles, there is an infinite number of forms comprised of variations in typography, page layout, navigational structures such as title pages, chapter markers and section breaks and physical forms such as paper and binding. The design and form of one book type, the exhibition catalogue, has been transformed in response to the requirement for sales revenue. I conjecture that the changes traced in some, but not all, exhibition books result from the resolution of tensions between the agency of publishers with one aim for the book and that of curatorial scholars with a very different purpose.

Publishing—scope, scale and museums

Understanding the scope and scale of publishing will help place subsequent discussions into context. Publishing at its simplest is a process that orders, designs and disseminates intellectual property. Three main functions support this enterprise—editing, production and sales. Thompson (2012:19) expands these functions to encompass ‘content acquisition and list building, financial investment and risk-taking, content development, quality control, management and coordination and sales and marketing’. One of the characteristic features of publishing is that these functions operate at a range of scales. By this, I mean that a publishing enterprise may be part of a multinational conglomerate such as Penguin Random House, which has nearly 250 contributing imprints covering publishing for the academic and professional, fiction, illustrated lifestyle and children’s markets. At the other end of the scale, a small multitasking staff may publish from an office. In between these extremes are independents such as Thames & Hudson, with over 2,000 titles in print, and large university presses such as Yale University Press, with offices in New Haven, CT, and London. Clearly, the annual output of books from publishing companies will vary according to the resources available, and publishers

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make extensive use of external suppliers to expand production. For example, freelance individuals contribute copyediting and proofreading services, and digital technologies allow production to be carried out in any part of the world. Companies based in Asia offer overnight services in design and layout, and companies based in Hong Kong, China and some Middle Eastern countries provide low-cost printing services. However, museum books demand quality production with accurate colour printing and a short delivery lead time so that the books are in place for scheduled events such as the opening events of exhibitions. For these reasons, many European museum publishers use printing companies in Europe.

These brief comments on trade publishing identify salient features of a creative industry which operates on a local, regional and global scale, that is composed of various commercial suppliers, is influenced and disrupted by digital technologies and delivers products and services in a variety of formats to disparate markets. This is the context in which to understand the production of books by collecting institutions. The objective of this investigation is printed books. Digital publishing is considered where relevant, but the focus is on print for the following reasons. First, books in printed format have proved resilient despite digital disruptions and remain viable as a publishing product, particularly for art collections. Second, the sale of printed books makes a considerable contribution to the funding of museums and galleries, unlike online delivery of digital products which are usually offered as free resources. Digital dissemination of museum intellectual property is considered when it intersects with print, such as in scholarly publishing where the results of research are usually distributed online or as downloadable files. This book omits some aspects of publishing by collections. It focuses on publishing for general or academic audiences, but not the publication of materials for teachers or those who accompany children on school visits, and I am not concerned with activities or worksheets for use by children and families in the museum. Multimedia resources aimed at engaging online audiences are not included, and neither are apps. These omissions are based on the premise that such resources are usually free and therefore do not support museum income. A further feature of museum publishing influences the selection and presentation of case studies. Art institutions produce more books annually for the general public than collections such as those in natural history museums and science centres. For this reason, examples and case studies are disproportionately concerned with publishing from art and historical museums. Science publishing is addressed where relevant, and this is primarily in relation to research.

Interdisciplinary fields of study

The current fields of study encompassing text, books, readers and print culture originate in the study of the dissemination of written language. As an emerging discipline, contributions from various authors (see, for example,

van der Vaal 2014; Willison 2009; Greetham 2009; Howsam 2006; Finkelstein and McCleery, 2006) offer perspectives on what constitutes this field and its relationship to other culturally animated areas of print. New disciplines coalesce from and carve out areas from established fields. The studies of books are equally required to argue for attention. Without doubt the study of books crosses traditional academic boundaries, so that the investigation of publishing generally, and by museums specifically, is theorised by concepts from diverse fields. Print culture is a relatively recent scholarly endeavour and consequently draws on frameworks associated with more established disciplines that view a book as 'a written text, a material object, and a cultural transaction' (Howsam 2006:vii). These functions are addressed individually; in the first instance, I consider museum books as commodities for sale. I report on the physical form of museum books that reflects the influences of agents such as curators, artists and sponsors. I then examine how museum books are read and consumed as cultural objects. In all this, commercial and cultural study investigates the museum book through a lens of production and reception communication processes and through this order—text, material object, cultural entity—aims to understand the complex relationships active in museum publishing.

A theoretical frame from which to systematically investigate these functions is offered in Thompson's (2012:3–4) adaptation of Bourdieu's concept of a field as a 'structured space ... occupied by agents and organisations whose power ... depends on the type and quantity of resources or "capital" they have at their disposal'. Fields are composed of 'different kinds and quantities of power and resources' and within these fields are found different 'practices ... competition, collaboration and reward'. Applying this concept to publishing, we can see that fields correlate with the published products and markets, such as the categories of publications listed earlier, each with their specific characteristics and readers. The agents such as directors, curators, editors, museum retailers, sponsors and commercial publishers operated within 'complex relations of power, competition [and] cooperation' (4) and 'the power of any agent or organisation is dependent on the kinds and qualities of resources or *capital* that it possesses' (5). The following example demonstrates how agency, negotiation, power and resources coalesce in the publication of an exhibition catalogue and is presented to show how this characterisation is useful in comprehending the relationships at play in museum book production. In this case, curators are a starting point. As agents influencing the written and physical form of the book, they exercise power in the negotiated processes of publishing. Curatorial writing draws on the scholarship that underlies their research roles in the creation and study of collections. Research undergirds the creation and presentation of exhibitions and catalogues and is part of a curator's remit. Turning to another agent in the production of exhibition books, publishers are tasked with producing these catalogues to budget and on schedule. They are also responsible for the sales of these books, and the

derived income to the institution, and for this reason work towards a visually aesthetic book that offers text that is accessible for a general audience. It is in the text, structure and form of the book that the negotiation and power plays out between these two agents. Curatorial writing in a style and register that is appropriate for an academic audience with the conventions of footnotes and appendices does not necessarily appeal to the general reader. Resolution of these different requirements for individual museum books occurs during the production processes and at department and director level, but these issues usually remain open to be played out in subsequent museum publishing projects.

This description characterises negotiations that are usually resolved at management levels above that of individual staff but that may reoccur within the production of individual books. Outside of the institution, Thompson's frame is readily applicable to the power, agency and resources at play in the external links museum publishing operate with commercial trade publishing. This is particularly apparent in the production of art books, where images derived from the museum's collections are an essential resource in producing informative and engaging books. Ownership of copyright and the sale of reproduction rights are required negotiations that have a direct impact on the costs of production and retail price for art books, and despite some resolution, these issues remain a source of some concern (Thorp 2006). In recent years, a few art institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and The Getty, Los Angeles, have adopted a policy allowing free use of images from works in their collections. Images are an essential feature of art books, and this resource in whatever way it is shared remains an area of negotiation, power and agency. In most museums with concerted publishing programmes, this part of the enterprise is managed within the enterprise or income-generating spaces such as shops and cafés, each with its own remit to return profits to the institution. The central chapters of this book offer a more detailed consideration of the agents, resources and negotiations apparent in exploiting the intellectual property inherent in a collection through publishing.

The museum book—production

Publishing, then, is characterised as occurring within fields comprising spaces with resources that are negotiated by individuals whose relative agency impinges on the resulting form of the book. This broader understanding of publishing now receives more definition as the book itself becomes the focus of our attention. Here we encounter a framework where production is viewed as worthy of research attention because it is the site where decisions are taken that affect the text, structure and physical nature of the book. McKenzie, who first drew attention to the agency of these processes, suggests the term 'sociology of the text' to describe this area of study (1986). As interpreted by Johns (2013:396–7), research into print culture, contemporary or historical,

needs to acquire an understanding of how 'the materials of literature (and any other cultural domain) were ... made and used' and of the fact that the book 'as a manufactured object is reliant on production processes', and its form is evidence for these processes. This is a potentially rich area of study for museum books since their form embodies the cultural agency of the collection. As an example of this, the involvement of commercial sponsorship to support museum publishing is explored in Chapter 4.

In an adjunct to the form and associated functions of museum books, Finkelstein and McCleery (2013:67) recognise that the *authority* of books emerges from acknowledged authorship. That is, the name of the author is set out prominently in a book by accepted convention, and this lends an authenticity to the text and its physical form which is turned to account by curators, museum directors and artists, among others. The authority of museum books both aligns with and draws on institutional authority. This attribute goes some way to explaining why contemporary artists embrace opportunities for a book to present their work that will freely circulate away from the museum for consumption by a wider, even global, audience. A further feature of the production process engenders confidence in the authenticity of texts; this feature is the consistency of an edition, which in modern books results from editorial practices that check and fix the text so that each book is identical.

We will see in the following section that readers are viewed as independent agents in the interpretation of meaning. However, I suggest that factual content in non-fiction books is presented for consumption in a fixed, non-negotiable writing style and structure. This combined power influences readers' reception of museum books. From these observations, one might conclude that exhibition books, supported by the authority of both the museum and the book, provide curators with a vehicle with which to reassert their power, either knowingly or innocently, at the same time that they are being urged to relinquish control in exhibition spaces. That institutions and their books are both redolent of authority is discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

The museum book—reception and reading

Despite this similarity across editions derived from consistent production practices, fiction is recognised as offering the potential for varied readings (see, for example, Radway 1984), and Barthes' declaration that 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author' (1977:148) draws attention to a theoretical framework from literary studies that identifies the reader as the final arbiter of meaning from written language. McKenzie's (1986) ideas concerning the social functions of books recur when we turn our focus on reading and readers, because the material form of the text and the physicality of the book influence reading and the way books are utilised in the lives of their owners; so we have two entities to consider, each with an

impact on communication: the book and the reader. Reading is emphasised as an intellectual process of interpretation that is *assisted* by features in the book such as the typography, page layout and structural indications such as headings, sections and chapters that signpost readers' passage through the text (Finkelstein and McCleery 2013:102). While the process of making the book generates these signs, their reception is dependent on the interpretive *strategies* of the reader. Reading also requires familiarity with typographic and format conventions acquired during the process of learning to read. How language is presented in written form and how these signs direct the reader's understanding is relevant to the reception of all texts, but the reception of non-fiction has received less attention from theorists, and few definitive statements on the interpretive strategies of readers are currently available. The complexity of academic texts such as art catalogues makes this interest particularly relevant to museum publishers. Without evidence to the contrary, it is appropriate to ask whether the structured presentation of non-fiction—the type most commonly published by museums—allow readers fewer interpretive opportunities and whether the design and format of the book combined with the curatorial authority of museums influences readers' reception of museum books. From these observations, one might conclude that exhibition books, supported by the authority of both the museum and the book, provide curators with a vehicle with which to reassert their power, either knowingly or innocently, at the same time that they are being urged to relinquish control in exhibition spaces. The impact of form and writing on the reception of exhibition books is explored in the central chapters.

There remain two areas of relevance to this study of museum publishing that need our consideration before moving into the structure of the book itself. The advent of digital technologies during the late twentieth century in the dissemination of knowledge is relevant to our interest in museum publishing. This aspect of publishing is covered following our consideration of the impact of museums and books in the development and construction of knowledge.