

The background features a large, light blue watermark of the ENRESSH logo, which consists of a circle of dots and the text 'ENRESSH' in a bold, sans-serif font.

# Where, what and why: books in the SSH

Workshop and  
ENRESSH TransWG Meeting 5-6  
November 2018 Copenhagen, Denmark

# We are NOT the University

- Time to explode the myth of the medieval University
- Modern universities are management driven
- Politically Perceived Societal needs
- Mass HE means mass mediocracy
- Mass HE opens HE to a wider population
- Excellence is needed, but excellence based on new ideas with new aims

# Building and exploding the myth

- Medieval University
  - Based around a small numbers of scholars
  - Surprisingly democratic as new talent arose
  - Twisted by the aristocratic young wolves
- Humbolt-Newman model
  - Researcher based
  - Education based on research
  - Excellence based on a privileged few
- Managerial model
  - Meets the needs of wider society with academic and vocational courses
  - Still seeks to maintain the myth for the sales pitch

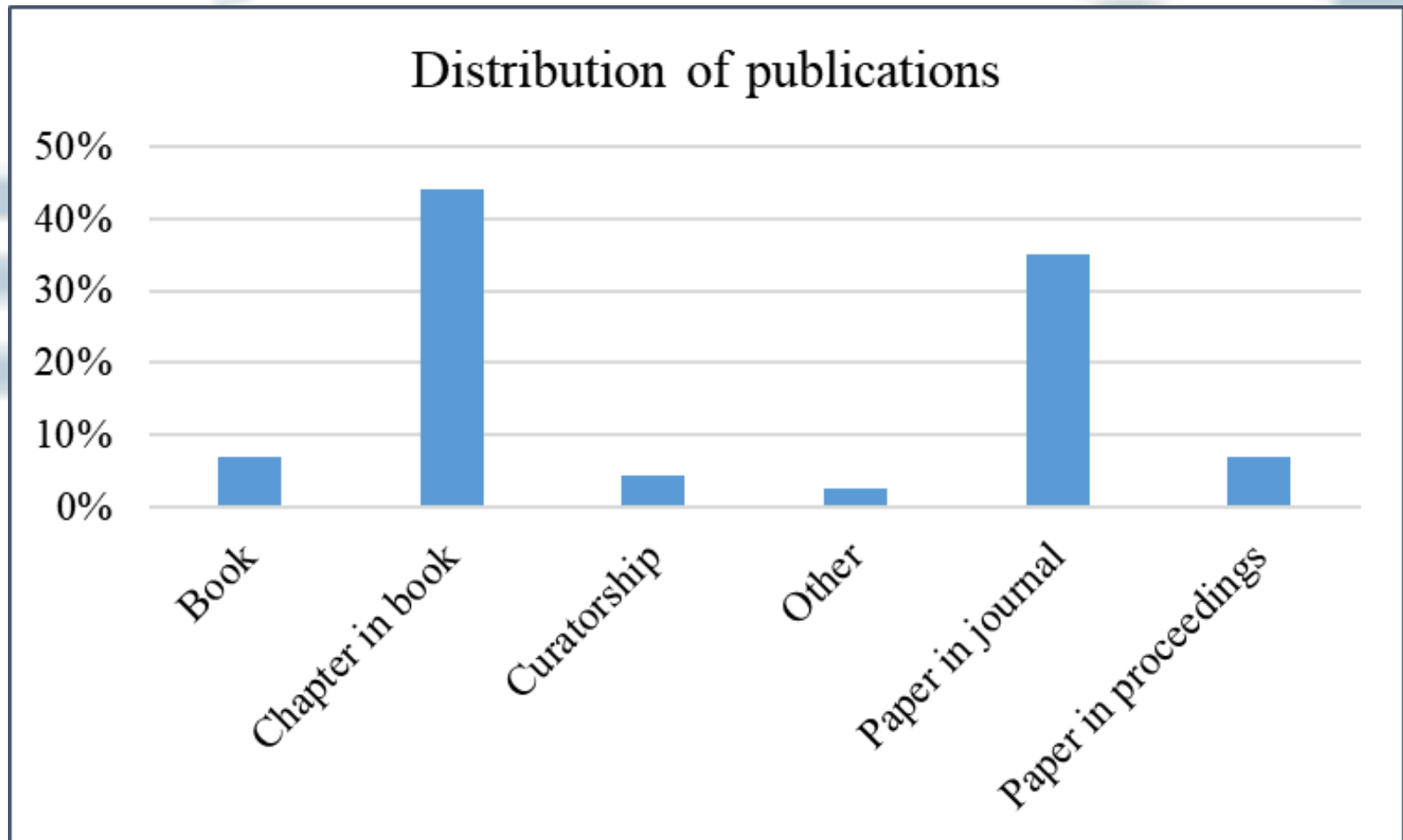
# Massification and centralisation

- Little room at the top
  - Scholarly visibility meant books, but very few
  - Non-publication did not lead to perishing
- Mass HE needs technicians and teachers
  - Science needs technicians, who also teach
  - SHS needs teachers, who may do research
- Excellence centred research
  - The rise of the journal
  - Mass publication controllable quality standards
  - Big centres for big science

# SSH evaluation in Italy

- RobinBa
  - Role of Books in Non-Bibliometric Areas (ANVUR, Italie), collaboration avec les universités Ca' Foscari (Venise) et Macerata
    - Database creation and analysis
    - Focus Groups
    - Corpus analysis with Atlas ti and SketchEngine
  - See: Williams, Geoffrey, Antonella Basso, Ioana Galleron, et Tiziana Lippiello. 2018. « More, Less or Better: The Problem of Evaluating Books in SSH Research ». In *The Evaluation of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities: Lessons from the Italian Experience*, édité par Andrea Bonaccorsi, 133-58. Cham, Switzerland: Springer

# RobinBa: Humanities dissemination



# Why publish a book? Lessons from the focus groups

- Some major topics deserve books, other (less massive but relevant as well) need articles. If well connected with other chapters, book chapters too may be the best way to treat an object. (source RobinBa)
- Till some years ago, when we were urged to publish articles in peer-reviewed journals, our most prestigious ways of dissemination were book chapters (due to the fact that a book focuses on a specific research subject, and that book chapters are usually broader and more ambitious than journal articles), conference proceedings (which sometimes contain very original and up-to-date essays) and monographs. (source RobinBa)

# Humanities researcher reasoned choices...

- **Outputs**
  - Monographs
    - In-depth studies on precise themes
    - Should be the exception not the rule
  - Book chapters
    - Longer and deeper than what is possible in an article
  - Articles
    - Wide publication with long shelf life. Prestige journals sought.
  - Proceedings
    - Rapid dissemination
- **Difficulties**
  - Long-term availability of the document
  - Quality control
  - Evaluation systems that cannot comprehend diversity or intention



# What is a book?

- Not such an easy question?
  - Different countries, different evaluation systems, different definitions
  - In academia, often considered a monograph, but other forms are also used
  - How many authors?
  - How long should it be?
  - Does it need an ISBN?
- Problems with books
  - Defining what is an academic publication
  - Identifying parasite publishers
  - Knowing publisher evaluation criteria
  - Distribution networks and print runs
  - No individual identifier for chapters unless a DOI
  - Loss of control of copyright, when the book is unavailable

# Books: a variety of outputs

- Academic works
  - Monographs
  - Collected works
    - A genuine collective effort around a clear central theme
    - Full editing of the volume with cross-refering between chapters
  - Critical editions
    - In-depth analysis with copious notes
  - Translations
    - Academic translations with user notes and references
  - Textbooks
    - High level works designed for an audience of researchers and doctoral students
  - Proceedings
    - Different levels of events– major international conferences, local or national events, workshops
- Non-academic audience
  - Textbooks
  - Popular works
- Hybrid or crossover works
  - Frequent in history with wide appeal to non-academic historians

# Potentially perverse effects of evaluation

- Books as a proxy for excellence can lead to distortions
  - Obligation to publish a book for recruitment or promotion leading to Mickey Mouse publishing
  - Books no-one is expected to read
  - Books few researchers or institution can afford to buy
  - Point systems which make it viable to produce several, rather than a single, output
  - Light books– little text, lots of images
  - Renaming proceedings as edited works
  - Avoiding the word ‘textbook’
  - Publishing abroad simply to be ‘international’

# Can book quality be judged? Or just publisher quality?

- Is the book published on a series edited by a respectable academic from the field?
- Has the book been reviewed by one or more experienced independent reviewers?
- Does the publisher have a genuine distribution network?
- Will the book be promoted?
- Does the book appear in university library collections?
- Is it possible to track sales?
- Are there reviews in respected journals?

# Science Europe: imposed un-thoughtout policy

- **cOALition S**
- The above principles shall apply to all types of scholarly publications, but it is understood that the timeline to achieve Open Access for monographs and books may be longer than 1 January 2020;
- In other words
  - If it is good for the hard sciences, it is good for everyone
  - Hard sciences do not publish books
  - The British Academy report can be ignored?

# What is an academic book?

- A book that is boring

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# What is an academic book?

- A book that is boring
- A book no-one wants to read

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# What is an academic book?

- A book that is boring
- A book no-one wants to read
- Thus a book that can be open access
  
- Congratulations. Wisdom goes out the window and the SSH are further devalorised.



# Fitting the SSH back in

- The SSH simply do not fit in
- Numerous questions about Open Access books need to be addressed
- Royal Historical Society
  - <https://5hm1h4aktue2uejbs1hsqt31-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/OA-Briefing-March-2018.pdf>

# Open Access

- Open Access is not adapted to the wide variety of book outputs
- Open access can only privilege rich researchers and is not a guarantee of quality
- However
- Could a core of Open Access outputs be created to ensure dissemination?
  - Theses, proceedings, reports – this requires the active participation of University presses
- Is it possible to improve long-term access to published works
  - Every chapter needs an individual identifier – DOI or other
  - Authors should retain the same open publication rights as for journals
  - Chapters should be re-publishable by authors after a reasonable publication embargo

# Research and Social Impact

- Evaluation privileges so-called academic books, but the SSH impact directly society and the Humanities are about humanity!
- Evaluation that ignores social impact ignores social value and is potentially harmful to society
  - Buying a novel, an intelligent person buys also the notes and the references
  - You don't have to be a historian to know that history is a vital subject
  - Books on social values can be fun, but tell the public about the serious side of psychology
  - The law is part of our everyday experience, so a law researcher has a lot to say that directly interests the public

# Ranking and evaluation need policy

- No matter how good your data base
- No matter how valid your evaluation procedures
- Nothing is worthwhile without explicit criteria based on policy based on knowledge of:
  - What researchers are doing and how they may be fulfilling the needs of society
  - What policy makers require
  - And what effects this has on research

# Conclusion

- Books are not the main output of the SSH, that is a myth, but
- Books and book chapters remain a major output of the humanities with research and societal value
  - The danger lies in the mantra becoming a rule to the detriment of others forms and a reasoned approach to dissemination
- Evaluation can and must valorise research, but not promote one form of dissemination above another without knowing why and that requires a methodological analysis combining bibliometric and non-bibliometric approaches.
- Good evaluation accepts all output for what it is rather than imposing poorly thoughtout values

The logo for ENRESSH features the text "ENRESSH" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The text is centered horizontally and partially overlaid by a circular graphic composed of blue dots of varying sizes, arranged in a pattern that suggests a globe or a network. The dots are arranged in a roughly circular pattern, with some larger dots and some smaller dots, creating a textured effect.

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- *Thank you for listening*

# Source documents

- <https://www.scienceeurope.org/coalition-s/>
- <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/debating-open-access>
- <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/open-access-journals-humanities-and-social-science>

# Further reading

- Williams, Geoffrey, Antonella Basso, Ioana Galleron, et Tiziana Lipiello. 2018. « More, Less or Better: The Problem of Evaluating Books in SSH Research ». In Bonaccorsi, 2018 pages 133-58.
- Bonaccorsi, Andrea. 2018. The Evaluation of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities: Lessons from the Italian Experience, Cham, Switzerland: Springer Verlag.