

Bibliodiversity

Call for paper
Self-publishing, vector of bibliodiversity?

Editor: Laurence Hugues (International Alliance of independent publishers), Étienne Galliard (Double ponctuation), Luc Pinhas. **Editorial committee:** Sophie Noël, Luc Pinhas, Gisèle Sapiro, Josée Vincent. **Advisory committee:** Françoise Benhamou, Jacques Michon, Jean-Yves Mollier. **Coordination of issue:** Sylvie Bosser, sylvie.bosser@univ-paris8.fr; www.bibliodiversity.org

Self-publishing, vector of bibliodiversity?

Issue coordinated by Sylvie Bosser (University of Paris 8, CEMTI)

The Author Earnings report of 2014 shows that five main American publishers produce 16% of all e-books listed on the Amazon's bestseller charts, while self-published books represent 31% of the total e-books sales registered on the Kindle Store. Self-published authors, traditionally in greater numbers overseas in the field of general literature (sci-fi, suspense, new romance, etc.) also tend to occupy an important place in other editorial markets¹. In France, the great amount of discussions on self-publishing at the 2016 Paris Book Fair, or the focus on "Should one self-publish?" in the March 2016 issue of *Lire* magazine "How to get published?"² seem like a good index of the positive outlook on self-publishing. According to an analysis produced by the French National Library³, more specifically through the Observatory of legal deposit, legal deposit self-published books amounted to 6% of new releases in 2005 (i.e. 4000 titles), while this figure stands at 15% for 2015 (11500 titles). Compulsory for publishers, the legal deposit is not obligatory for self-published authors, which leads to think that the "mute objects of expression", to borrow on Francis Ponge (1976), is an important dimension of production.

Self-publishing is not so much perceived as an egocentric, narcissist or even avenging gesture, although an anti-publishing or anti-establishment trend persists to a certain extent, critical of the endorsement power held by publishers. Some authors choose to directly sell their books via their website, to recover more rights than they would have through a publisher, but this possibility depends on an established reputation and readership. Assuming functions of a third party (publisher) in terms of direct relationship with potential readers, whether through choice or obligation and/or strategy once rejected by "insiders" – in the increasingly difficult context of lack of access to a prime author status (Legendre, 2010) –, seems perfectly adequate with the spirit of the time, where horizontal communication is promoted, as is the absence of intermediaries and a direct relationship between producer and consumer, short circuits, distrust towards experts, elites and comitology.

While self-publishing is demystified, it is mainly dynamic in its digital format, for which requirements are minimal. Furthermore, along with digitalisation came the idea of a modernity anchored in creativity construed as a social norm (Andonova, 2015). The availability of digital technologies, such a self-publishing platform Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) or new services to authors (such as those proposed in France by Publishroom, for example, or Canopé and Amazon, who suggest to "profs to self-publish"⁴) have favoured the emergence of this new written output. Amazon's argument stipulates : « *It's fast and easy to independently publish your (...) book* »⁵. On the French version of the self-publishing platform, we are told, "Welcome on the e-books indies page"⁶. The notion of "independence" is also questioned by these developments. Indeed, in the United States, we often speak of "indies" authors or e-books, the figure of the independent author also being assimilated and claimed in the hexagonal context. But what

¹ See report of *Publishers Weekly*: <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/authors/pw-select/article/63455-surprising-self-publishing-statistics.html> and the *The Author Earnings* website (<http://authorearnings.com/reports/>).

² <https://www.relay.com/lire/comment-se-faire-editer-numero-443-litterature-217189-35.html>.

³ http://bbf.enssib.fr/matieres-a-penser/l-observatoire-du-depot-legal_66702.

⁴ See <http://www.idboox.com/infos-e-books/e-books-education-amazon-et-canope-proposent-aux-profs-de-sautoediter/>.

⁵ https://www.amazon.com/gp/seller-account/mm-summary.page.html?ld=AZFooterSelfPublish&topic=200260520&ref=sxts_snp1_5_0_2493274182&qid=1465911237&pf_rd_t=301&pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_p=2493274182&pf_rd_i=kindle+direct+publishing&pf_rd_r=NW5ER1RDP4ENDR53BSKA&pf_rd_s=desktop-signpost

⁶ <https://www.amazon.fr/b?ie=UTF8&node=2041852031>.

independence are we talking about? Claimed by an author, this term can have various meanings⁷. Moreover, its usage might seem paradoxical, as the focus on independence can mask a “re-intermediation” movement and a recuperation strategy created by digital platforms. By idealising the user as self-producer, such as other actors of the Web (Bouquillion, Miège, Moeglin, 2013), Amazon, amongst others, is simply pursuing, with the KDP measure, the known strategy of delegation of the work of diffusion for books sold on its platform, with externalisation towards the buyer. The “circle of belief” (Bourdieu, 1977) thus relies, according to Amazon, on the user who can be in turns a producer of a cultural good, following incentive models largely showcased⁸, and the one who participate, via the algorithmic triage – to the self-published works’ recommendation, legitimisation and purchase functions.

Publishers can no longer shy away from the expansion of self-publishing in the contemporary book ecology. Although some publishing houses consider self-publishing as a pool of potential authors particularly in some specific literary genres, other publishers, such as Chemins verts, actively involve potential authors and readerships: on the one hand in the selection process – contrary to the “selective reading” effected by manuscript departments (Fouché, Simonin, 1999) –, by organizing an annual competition in partnership with the Fnac/Kobo, and on the other hand, in the work on the text with the referring publisher and the author, via Internet (Bossier, 2017). With this kind of editorial strategy, similar to crowdsourcing, and flattering for the amateur (Howes, 2008; Matthews, Rouzé, 2014), we are far from the reader’s participation who completes the book, as imagined by Umberto Eco (1965). Moreover, this relative subversion of the act of writing, of the status in which the author was until now positioned (Sapiro, 2007), finds echoes in the recent creation of schools⁹, workshops, and even tertiary trainings such as the MA in creative writing offered by the University of Paris 8, co-directed by Olivia Rosenthal and Lionel Ruffel. This creative writing practice represents a necessary path for Anglo-Saxon aspiring authors (it is for example taught by Toni Morrison at Princeton), and is increasingly developing in France, for example with Gallimard publishing house having created the Nouvelle Revue Française in 2012, a series of workshops facilitated by published authors, such as Camille Laurens.

Therefore, several questions emerge:

- Does the emerging production, new writing practices (an “uberisation” of writing?¹⁰) and the transformation of the status of author – as a “producer” can be more volatile, less fixed on a single mode of relationship to the reader –, support bibliodiversity? Or does it strengthen the division of the market that increasingly gets (bi) polarised between a diverse production, shattered and little read, and a formatted and bestsellerised output?
- If there is bibliodiversity, what is its scope, as defined by Boltanski and Thévenot (1987), how can it be approached, beyond the exponential multiplication of the number of titles? Is the increase of overproduction, already fed by publishers themselves, synonymous with a diversity of reading practices?
- If literature represents the prism through which we approach self-publishing, is it as active in other editorial sectors such as comics, for example, as is the case in the USA? Furthermore, the issue of diversity of the geographical zones should also be asked,

⁷ Even if, in this field, the terminology is being developed overseas, an “indie” being not exactly the same than a “self-published” author. See: <http://www.steenaholmes.com/whats-an-indie-author/>.

⁸ See for example, Agnès Martin-Lugand with her book, *Les Gens heureux fument et boivent du café*.

⁹ The school Les Mots opened in 2017 in Paris. It is managed by author Alexandre Lacroix and will be facilitated by some forty authors, including Jérôme Ferrari, Chloé Delaume.

¹⁰ See: <https://jle2016.sciencesconf.org/resource/page/id/1>.

especially with reference to Francophone Africa and the Arab world, where some writers go the self-publishing route before creating a publishing house;

- Is the disappearance of a middle person, emanating from the “mediation crisis” argued by Marcel Gauchet (2009)¹¹, a good thing for the author and reader? Do digital technologies really transform the author into a publisher? The different “levels” of self-publishing, from a case where a publisher keeps selecting the texts (but leaves the author managing the correction/promotion/commercialisation processes), and pure self-publishing (where everything is decided/implemented by the author) must also be considered. Finally, to which extent does the complexification of production – a greater number of producers, a hyper offer that causes the implementation of a different attention economics –, provoke an adverse effect and direct the reader to better known publishers’ labels?
- Does self-publishing represent a generational phenomenon? Does its development inscribe itself in an ephemeral modality, emanating from the intersection between accessibility to enabling technologies, and persistence by some generations of the socio-cultural and symbolic status of the book? What about the younger generations?

So many questions that must be addressed and that this issue alone cannot exhaustively explore. The intersection of approaches from various disciplines (information and communication sciences, including socio-economics of cultural industries, sociology of literature, sociology of cultural practices, literature, history of publishing, etc.) seems to be fruitful to establish an appropriate vantage point. Beyond this expected multidisciplinary, it seems important to take stock of the phenomenon studied by a transnational reflection, able to confront relevant settings based on various geographical areas. Finally, professional experiences can also be the subject of a contribution.

¹¹ Colloquium of 22 February 2007 on the Future of the book, DLL/CNL, Mission Livre 2010.

Bibliography

Andonova, Yanita, 2015. « Promesses et paradoxes de la référence créative », in *Revue Les Enjeux de l'information et la communication*, supplément 2015 B, Approches critiques des injonctions à la créativité : relations entre secteur culturel et monde du travail industriel : <http://lesenjeux.u-grenoble3.fr/pageshtml/art2015.html#supplementB>

Boltanski, Luc, Thévenot, Laurent, 1987. *Les Économies de la grandeur*, Paris, Gallimard.

Bosser, Sylvie. « Les enjeux du co-publishing en littératures de genre : la dimension communautaire dans la capitalisation de l'autoédition par des éditeurs traditionnels » (upcoming)

Bouquillion, Philippe, Miège Bernard, Mœglin Pierre, 2013. *L'Industrialisation des biens symboliques : les industries créatives en regard des industries culturelles*, PUG, Grenoble.

Bourdieu, Pierre, 1977. « La production de la croyance. Contributions à une économie des biens symboliques », *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, vol.13, n° 1, p. 3-43.

Eco, Umberto, 1965. *L'Œuvre ouverte*, Paris, Le Seuil, « Points ».

Fouché, Pascal, Simonin, Anne, 1999. « Comment on a refusé certains de mes livres. Contribution à une histoire sociale du littéraire », *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, n° 126-127, p. 103-115.

Gauchet, Marcel, 2009. « Les métiers du livre dans la crise des médiations » in *Les Cahiers du livre*, n°7, Qu'est-ce qu'un livre aujourd'hui. Pages, Marges, Écrans, p. 42-46.

Howe, Jeff, 2008. *Crowdsourcing*, Century.

Legendre, Bertrand, 2010. « Le primo romancier à l'épreuve de la fabrication de l'auteur : constructions et déconstructions », in *La Fabrication de l'auteur*, sous la direction de Josée Vincent et Marie - Pier Luneau, Québec, Éditions Nota bene, p. 123 – 131.

Matthews, Jacob, Rouzé, Vincent, 2014. *La Culture par les foules ? Le crowdfunding et le crowdsourcing en question*, Paris, MkF Editions, « Les Essais numériques ».

Ponge, Francis, 1976. *La Rage de l'expression*, Paris, Gallimard, Poésie/Gallimard.

Sapiro, Gisèle, 2007. « Je n'ai jamais appris à écrire » Les conditions de formation de la vocation d'écrivain », in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, n° 168, p. 12-33.

Publication calendar

- **Submission of abstracts:** clearly stating: topic, problem statement, theoretical and methodology frameworks, field and main results of analysis. The abstract must be 4 000 characters, including spaces; **submission deadline 30 June 2017**
- **Feedback to contributors: 5 July 2017**
- **Submission of full articles: 30 November 2017**
- **Initial feedback** formulated by the coordinator (and eventually editorial team) and sent to authors: **15 December 2017**
- **Articles sent for two blind peer-reviews: 30 January 2018**
- **Return of peer-reviews or rejection of the paper: 15 March 2018**
- **Re-submission of revised papers**, on **15 April 2018**, as well as introduction chapter written by the coordinator
- **Publication of issue: May-June 2018**

Style guide for submissions

Abstracts

The proposal provides an overview of the topic, problem statement, theoretical and methodology frameworks, field and main results of the analysis. The abstract (excluding bibliography) must have 4 000 characters, including spaces.

Language of publication

Articles published in this issue of *Bibliodiversity* will **only** be in French for budgetary reasons, and articles cannot be professionally translated from other languages.

However, articles in other languages than French (including articles in English) can be published directly online, as a complement to the designed issue of the journal, on the *Bibliodiversity* website (<http://www.bibliodiversity.org/>) and on the website of the International Alliance of independent publishers (www.alliance-editeurs.org). These articles will be subjected to the same process (blind peer-reviews) than articles published in French in the journal.

Articles

Articles should have approximately **25 to 30 000 characters, including spaces**. Authors are invited to give a title to their article, as well as sub-titles.

Bibliography

Bibliodiversity journal conforms in the main to the ISO 690 international standard for bibliographic referencing (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISO_690). Only those bibliographic references that are cited in the text (this includes tables and charts) are presented at the end of the article; authors should check that these quotations match with their end list of references. The reference given in the body of the text should include the author's name and the year of publication. At the end of the article the references are presented in alphabetical order, without numbering.

Contacts

Coordination of issue: sylvie.bosser@univ-paris8.fr

Editorial: contact@bibliodiversity.org

A co-publishing between

(:?!;) D O U B L E
P O N C T U A T I O N



**International
Alliance
of independent
publishers**