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Modes of Publication: Introduction

Media, Practices, Structures

Modes of publication matter. As the media landscape diversifies technologically as well as in terms of formats and framings, our attention in the history of knowledge is drawn to the many ways in which knowledge is shared, circulated, and made available. In addition, different modes of publication shape and affect knowledge formation and its application.

Approaches informing the study of modes of publication and publication history include media studies, anthropology, or sociology. In addition, the practitioners' perspectives from library science or archival studies provide new insights. As Trevor Owens and Jesse Johnston have shown in the context of historical knowledge in digital archives, modes of publication have received renewed attention in the wake of the digital turn.¹ Marshal McLuhan's catchphrase about the medium being the message, which once enthused communication theorists in the 1960s, has since become a well-worn (over-worn?) slogan.² Nevertheless, it does have something to offer to the history of knowledge. How do we mediate and transmit knowledge? Does visualization, for example, always mean simplification or could there be more complexity?³ Are we able to garner different kinds of knowledge from different types of materials?

Besides a media-centered approach, a focus on modes of publication may also shed light on practices in an innovative way. While cognitive and epistemic practices have been established as an object of critical inquiry in the history of knowledge,⁴ thinking about the process of "doing knowledge" often remains confined to methodological and praxiological discourses. Already in 2002, however, Daniela Ahrens and Anette Gerhard argued that our understanding of knowledge is becoming

1 Trevor Owens and Jesse A. Johnston, "Archivists as Peers in Digital Public History," in *Handbook of Digital Public History*, ed. Serge Noiret, Mark Tebeau, and Gerben Zaagsma (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022).

2 Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium Is the Message," in *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

3 Gemma Anderson, *Drawing as a Way of Knowing in Art and Science* (Bristol: Intellect, 2017); Gillian Rose, "On the Relation between 'Visual Research Methods' and Contemporary Visual Culture," *The Sociological Review* 62 (2014).

4 Simon Barker, Charlie Crerar, and Trystan S. Goetze, *Harms and Wrongs in Epistemic Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

ing more fluid and constructivist, resulting in a shift in attention from the question of *where* knowledge is accessed to *how* it is accessed; from how it is conserved or stored to how it is generated.⁵ While this is not only a result of advances in digitized processes alone, and certainly predates them in some cases, new technologies raise our awareness when it comes to processes and force us to more consciously reflect on their ramifications. How does collaboration work? How may expertise be mobilized? What is the role of curating and categorizing research data?⁶

One thing that many practices have in common is that they provide some kind of reorganization, transposition, or translation, while in doing so indirectly adding to the content. This could mean turning data into narrative formats in articles and books or (re-)imagining abstract systems in visual representations, such as schematics or models. Similarly, this could apply to arranging information in networks of references using, once again, visual representation (for example, in network theory), traditional cross reference marginalia used especially during the Middle Ages, or their digital reincarnation – the hyperlink. It could also simply mean linguistic translation, which despite the best efforts of translation studies, is still often considered little more than a means to an end. The emphasis remains on a functional understanding of foreign idioms without paying sufficient attention to the cultural subtext and nuances. And yet, a multitude of special terminology, from *persona* or *esprit* to *folkhem* or, indeed, *Wissenschaft*, remain un-translatable and highlight the limits of literal translation.⁷ Anyone who does not share in the globally dominant language community – at this point still mostly anglophone – can attest that language profoundly conditions modes of publication.

Critically interrogating structural contexts as part of understanding knowledge also involves extrinsic factors such as financial considerations, legal restrictions, and power hierarchies that impact the framework of publication practices. Imad Moosa, for example, has examined the rather problematic effect of the publish-or-parish culture in Western and now global academia and how this intersects with market-driven modes of publication.⁸ The ongoing challenges of open access publishing with stakeholders among academics, publishers, policymakers, and society at large (i.e., taxpayers) links ideals concerning democratic access to – and

5 Daniela Ahrens and Anette Gerhard, “‘Doing Knowledge’: Neue Formen der Wissensorganisation durch den Einsatz neuer Medien,” *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft* 50, no. 1 (2002).

6 Mark Tebeau, “Curation: Toward a New Ethic of Digital Public History,” in *Handbook of Digital Public History*, ed. Serge Noiret et al. (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022).

7 Barbara Cassin et al., ed., *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

8 Imad Moosa, *Publish or Perish: Perceived Benefits versus Unintended Consequences* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018), accessed May 2, 2023, doi.org/10.4337/9781786434937.000007.

participation in (!) – knowledge to restrictions related to copyright and intellectual property and needs to strike a balance between fair use and fair pay.

In short, relevant questions deal with material and social structures as well as traditions, ideas, and communication processes. Just like the history of knowledge generally, exploring modes of publication requires an interdisciplinary approach, which can draw productively on the new field of publication studies.

Publication Studies and the History of Knowledge

Publication studies have become a growing and multidisciplinary field. At some universities, it is a discipline in its own right, but it may also be conducted by researchers in a number of additional disciplines ranging from science studies, economics, and sociology to anthropology, communication studies, and literary studies. There is a strong focus on contemporary publishing practices and norms, often related to the digital transformation of the book market and the media landscape of the 21st century. Another important topic concerns critical investigations into contemporary production conditions in the natural and human sciences.⁹

Alongside contemporary studies, there is a significant current of historically oriented scholarship. Drawing on a well-established tradition of book history, other formats and modes such as encyclopedias, publishing houses, or the paper trade are examined in different periods and settings, often inspired by recent media history perspectives.¹⁰ Lisa Gitelman's contribution to the first volume of *History of Intellectual Culture* may be seen as a manifestation of this approach. Being both historically concrete and theoretically sophisticated, she traces the changes in the rules for citation across nine editions of the *MLA Handbook* between 1977 and 2021, while relating them to the transformation of the media landscape at large.¹¹

9 Simone Murray, "Publishing Studies: Critically Mapping Research in Search of a Discipline," *Publishing Research Quarterly* 22 (2006), accessed May 2, 2023, doi.org/10.1007/s12109-007-0001-4; Alison Baverstock, "What Significance Does Publishing Studies Have Right Now?" *Learned Publishing* 33, no. 4 (2020), accessed May 2, 2023, doi.org/10.1002/leap.1319.

10 See, for instance, Linn Holmberg and Maria Simonsen, eds., *Stranded Encyclopedias, 1700–2000: Exploring Unfinished, Unpublished, Unsuccessful Encyclopedic Projects* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021); Daniel Bellingradt and Anna Reynolds, eds., *The Paper Trade in Early Modern Europe: Practices, Materials, Networks* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

11 Lisa Gitelman, "Citation and Mediation: The Evolution of MLA Style," in *History of Intellectual Culture*, ed. Charlotte Lerg, Johan Östling, and Jana Weiß (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022), accessed May 2, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110748819-002.

There is also clearly an increasing interest in scientific and scholarly publications. Recent examples include Alex Csiszar's *The Scientific Journal* (2018), a book on authorship and the politics of knowledge in the 19th century, and the edited volume *Science Periodicals in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2020). In addition, it is easy to find detailed studies of the publication practices of individual scientists and discussions on different scientific sub-genres (e.g., scientific book reviews).¹² Many of these studies use publication patterns as entry points to analyze the orders, hierarchies, and structures of knowledge in a given chronological and geographical context.

These historically informed publication studies have in the last decade also served as a rich and critical source of inspiration for the emerging field of the history of knowledge. For instance, James A. Secord's work is an important point of reference for many historians of knowledge. He published key books like *Victorian Sensation* (2000) and *Visions of Science* (2014) that show how rewarding it is to study the book market and its changing conditions in order to understand how scientific knowledge was produced and circulated.¹³ In a recently published article in *Isis*, moreover, he adopts a similar perspective to reinterpret how, when, and why "the scientific revolution" was established as a master narrative in the history of science.¹⁴ Furthermore, book and media history perspectives have underpinned various recent studies in the history of knowledge, from discussions on early modern printed marginalia and analyses of how individual works served as sites in which knowledge circulated to the importance of paperbacks and book cafés for postwar popular education.¹⁵

12 Alex Csiszar, *The Scientific Journal: Authorship and the Politics of Knowledge in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018); Gowan Dawson et al., eds., *Science Periodicals in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Constructing Scientific Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020); Jenny Beckman, "The Publication Strategies of Jöns Jacob Berzelius (1779–1848): Negotiating National and Linguistic Boundaries in Chemistry," *Annals of Science* 73, no. 2 (2016); Sjang ten Hagen, "Evaluating Knowledge, Evaluating Character: Book Reviewing by American Historians and Physicists (1900–1940)," *History of Humanities* 7, no. 2 (2022).

13 James A. Secord, *Victorian Sensation: The Extraordinary Publication, Reception, and Secret Authorship of Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); James A. Secord, *Visions of Science: Books and Readers at the Dawn of the Victorian Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

14 James A. Secord, "Inventing the Scientific Revolution," *Isis* 114, no. 1 (2023).

15 Kajsa Weber, "Luther in Printed Marginalia: Reference Notes, Reading and Representations in Swedish Lutheran Prints 1570–1630," *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 24, no. 2 (2022); Helge Jordheim, "The Printed Work as a Site of Knowledge Circulation: Dialogues, Systems, and the Question of Genre," in *Circulation of Knowledge: Explorations into the History of Knowledge*, ed. Johan Östling et al. (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2018); Johan Östling, Anton Jansson, and Ragni Svensson, "Public Arenas of the Humanities: The Circulation of Knowledge in the Postwar Period," in *The Hu-*

Just like for many other contributions to the history of knowledge, these kinds of publication studies have the potential to put our present situation in perspective. While they arise from a scholarly interest in historical processes and phenomena, they may, at the same time, stimulate a more informed discussion and foster self-reflection regarding our own academic practices.

This thematic section has a similar ambition by opening up the diversity of aspects and approaches. From a media-centered perspective, **Chelsea A. Rodriguez** considers storage and retrieval in the analog-to-digital archive of the *New York Times*. In doing so, she interrogates the potential, limits, and methodological challenges of digitization in historical research, in particular when using large samples of newspaper sources. Modes of publication in the context of “doing knowledge” are at the heart of **Elena Falco**’s analysis of the Wikipedian community. Her contribution traces how tensions arise in the context of the encyclopedia between ideals of Randian objectivism and growing calls for acknowledging identity and positionality. From a more historical perspective, **Elisavet Papalexopoulou** addresses a core issue in publication studies, namely the politics of translation. Looking at Greece in the Age of Revolutions, her contribution expounds on the ways in which women were able to mobilize and leverage their knowledge of language to participate in the philosophical and social discourse of the day, especially through the paratexts of translated works. Finally, in an overview of publication formats for university histories from a library science perspective, **Jean-Pierre Hérubel** ponders questions of genre within the structural framework of academic research, institutional representation politics, and popular publication markets.

Overall, in studying modes of publication, the contributions to this thematic section invite us to take seriously the many layers of presenting, sharing, and circulating knowledge. Reading these processes through the lens of media, practices, and structures, and in light of recent advances in publication studies, once again stresses the cultural formation of knowledge.

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