

ARTICLE

# The Revolution Must Be Published: Toward a Radically Inclusive Publishing Ecology

Daniel Fisher-Livne<sup>1</sup> , Kath Burton<sup>2</sup>  and Catherine Cocks<sup>3</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, OH, USA; <sup>2</sup>Taylor and Francis Group, Abingdon, UK and <sup>3</sup>Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, NY, USA

**Corresponding author:** Kath Burton; Email: [katherine.burton@tandf.co.uk](mailto:katherine.burton@tandf.co.uk)

(Received 05 June 2024; revised 28 August 2024; accepted 29 August 2024)

## Abstract

The humanities cannot go public without publishing. In this contribution to the Manifesto issue of Public Humanities, Daniel Fisher-Livne, Kath Burton, and Catherine Cocks highlight the radically inclusive publishing practices necessary to support the Public Humanities ecosystem. The authors explain how Publishing and the Publicly Engaged Humanities Working Group activities have prepared the ground for future growth, directing attention to the inherently collaborative, multimodal and values-based publishing practices of engaged scholars. This paper builds on the central thesis of the Working Group, calling for the implementation of a radically inclusive ecology of publishing practices that embody and nurture the unique facets, connections and aims of publicly engaged publications.

**Keywords:** publishing; public humanities; engaged research; values; digital

If public humanities is to realize its potential to benefit all in higher education and beyond, it must be published in some way – traditional or unconventional – and be discoverable.

During 2020, a working group of scholars, publishers, and librarians convened online under the auspices of Routledge, Taylor & Francis, and the National Humanities Alliance to explore some of the publishing challenges and opportunities for engaged scholars in the humanities. While public scholarship is deeply rooted in the humanities, it has spread dramatically across the disciplines during the last 25 years. When this work gets published, its fit and format create certain challenges in the existing publishing ecosystem due to the nature of public scholarship. The working group mapped these challenges, culminating in the publication of a set of model publishing practices in early 2021.<sup>1</sup> In the years since, members of the working group have gone on to convene multiple sessions, workshops, and conversations and publish several pieces, all of which explore the implications of a central thesis: building the field of publicly engaged humanities through publication, in partnership with communities within and beyond academia, can both do enormous good in the world *and* help

<sup>1</sup> Burton et al. 2021a.

build the field. However, publishing the public humanities requires rethinking scholarly communication with a wider range of producers and consumers in mind.

Academic research and publishing systems continue to favor conventional scholarly publishing models, while the diverse forms of knowledge emerging from publicly engaged projects derived from working directly with and for communities require novel and more dynamic (often digital) publishing solutions. Public humanities publishing must also develop organically out of the values that underpin this kind of work.

In the 2023 *Publishing Values-Based Scholarly Communication*<sup>2</sup> working group members teamed up with members of the HuMetricsHSS Initiative (<https://humetricshss.org/>) to craft an intentionally values-based Open Educational Resource that situated values (openness, collaboration, collegiality, and shared authority) at the center of the process of creating the work, inspired by the HuMetricsHSS white paper *Walking the Talk*.<sup>3</sup> If published in forms appropriate to their values and goals, publicly engaged projects have greater potential to generate the social results their participants seek (see the vast array of publicly engaged humanities projects cataloged in the Humanities for All database, <https://humanitiesforall.org/>). Therefore, borrowing from Raymond Williams – “To be truly radical is to make hope possible, rather than despair convincing”<sup>4</sup> – we propose a *radically inclusive* category of publishing that prioritizes community voices and mutual benefit.

### Radically inclusive publishing practices

Existing publishing models and accredited publications do not fully recognize all parts of the process and all modalities of presentation that engaged scholars are adopting in a values-based and engaged approach. The challenges presented to engaged scholars and the lack of appropriate publishing outlets hampers the development and the value of public scholarship in education, research, and wider society. Additionally, the work of publicly engaged scholars is not always recognized or rewarded by existing systems, structures, and hierarchies and can often be seen as a detriment to career progression. Scholarly communication, primarily publication in books and journals, plays an important role in an individual scholar’s career progression. It follows that publishing models that support career progression as well as an explicitly values-based approach to scholarly communication are therefore required for this kind of knowledge to flourish.

Developing a publishing system (or systems) that is rooted in the radically inclusive aim of doing enormous good in the world takes dedicated propagation and growth. There is a reason why we have chosen an ecological metaphor for this piece.

As more genres of work are recognized as “scholarly publications,” a set of classifications emerges that reflect the diversity of publicly engaged humanities publishing. This ecosystem consists of multiple *organisms* (exhibits, performances, community archives, and other participatory, visual, and collective activities) that foster a variety of communities and goals. Such events are often more appealing and effective ways of “making public” the work of a community-engaged project than a written text alone. However, it remains the case that books and articles are more likely to be cited in tenure and promotion conversations than

<sup>2</sup> Burton et al. 2021b.

<sup>3</sup> HuMetrics HSS Initiative 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Williams 1989.

any other output or data produced.<sup>5</sup> Broadening what counts as “published” as well as what counts as “scholarship” is crucial for supporting both the scholarly and the public aims of the publicly engaged humanities.

Genre classification is not the only difficulty. There also exist challenges particular to the conditions of producing publicly engaged scholarship that make publication more complex and indeed more important. For example, publicly engaged work is about *relationships*, process, and methodology – how and why the project partners chose to do this work together – as much as it is about outcomes. The publicly engaged humanities need publishing options that include all aspects of a project’s processes and methodologies, including failures and adjustments arising from the messy – and often time-consuming – process of working across diverse public or community groups (cf. Goldenberg and Tell<sup>6</sup>). Alternative formats, timelines, and criteria for marking progress need to go hand-in-hand with sustainable, flexible publishing forums that share the values of publicly engaged humanities scholars.

Further, scholarly and public partners are collectively engaged in building the publicly engaged humanities as a field of research and practice; every publication must ask how *all* the voices involved in a project’s life cycle can be included in a project’s publication. And if that is not enough, publicly engaged scholars also need to effectively communicate these complex projects to their scholarly peers and beyond to a larger public. Works that incorporate multiple voices, are broadly accessible, and are designed to intervene in public issues, may not fit easily into the highly conventional design of scholarly products. The multivocal, collaborative nature of publicly engaged work poses challenges for linear, author-driven, print-based publications and is essential for maintaining a *rootedness* in public-good goals. That is why digital, open, and *publicly engaged* humanities are symbiotes.<sup>7</sup> They are built on shared values and require innovation in the forms and aims of publication.

Richly depicting and re-centering an examination of engaged scholars’ radically inclusive efforts – for instance, in ways that resemble the call for more inclusive practices in the Digital Humanities<sup>8</sup> – is situated at the heart of our approach to building the field through publication. We believe that collectively we can create the radically inclusive publishing systems we want to see. Systems that value the rich array of inputs, processes, forms, formats, and academic, alongside community voices, just as much as the outputs.

### **Toward a radically inclusive publishing ecology**

Against the backdrop of an evolving research system that is moving toward a more open, digital, societally responsive, flexible, and networked model, the time is right to explore how we might create paradigm-busting publication pathways for public scholars and their partners that make visible, accessible, discoverable, and preservable all parts of the work being produced. We need to find ways to fill the gaps (and address the inequities for public scholars) in the publication pathways that have been created and sustained by the dominant publishing paradigm. Both how engaged scholars publish and what they publish are changing to serve broader purposes and audiences. For the publishing ecology to continue

<sup>5</sup> Ruediger and MacDougall 2023 and Rosenblum et al. 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Burton et al. 2021a.

<sup>7</sup> Sundaram 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Nieves 2022.

to thrive and grow, these new modes and outputs must be given just as much status in evaluations as more standard forms of scholarly outputs.<sup>9</sup>

In this moment of celebration that is the manifesto issue of *Public Humanities*, we are calling for greater collaboration with and cooperation across a wider range of information professionals – publishers, authors, public partners, technicians, librarians, and more! – to think through what it means to produce knowledge in service to public, rather than solely disciplinary, aims.

Drawing on the principles growing out of our working group's activities, we propose the following seven-step call to creating a radically inclusive publishing model for the publicly engaged humanities:

1. Sow research methods that involve community members in the design of community impact – create successful processes and methods from the ground up! Publicly engaged humanities scholars and their public partners, this journal, and the National Humanities Alliance's *Humanities for All* database are good examples.
2. Nurture online platforms for the co-publication of community/public engaged projects with, in, and among the existing fertile fields – use Knowledge Commons (formerly Humanities Commons) and HASTAC Commons and all the commonses!
3. Fertilize cross-cutting conversations – embrace contributions from multiple academic and public partners and adapt (and adopt) the CRediT ([www.credit.niso.org](http://www.credit.niso.org)) taxonomy specifically for the public humanities! Community groups, scholars, and institutions like libraries, cultural centers, museums, and humanities councils (in the United States) are at the forefront of this work.
4. Weed out the noise – connect publicly engaged scholars with publishing professionals to work out if this *really* is a book or some other kind of publication...! Experienced engaged scholars, editors at presses committed to public, open, and digital humanities publishing, and Commons users all have valuable advice to share.
5. Graft emerging publicly engaged scholarship onto the sturdy stock of library and archival expertise in metadata creation, deposit, and indexing to secure the best chance of discovery and re-use – share what is possible when you have it and make it useable by others! Librarians and archivists are key partners in ensuring the discoverability and long-term viability of this kind of work.<sup>10</sup>
6. Gather collaborative writing opportunities – open up channels for expert knowledge gifting between participants to unlock publishing pathway potential! This journal, by formalizing a community of scholars, and use of the Commons open up these opportunities.
7. Regenerate open scholarship principles – promote open educational resources as radically inclusive publicly engaged humanities solutions! Imagine this journal – and all the informal and semi-formal commons and communities where publicly

<sup>9</sup> HuMetrics HSS Initiative 2022 and MLA 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Urberg 2020.

and community engaged work is flourishing – as a community garden where we can work together to nurture deep roots and cultivate the mycorrhizal networks of a new publishing ecosystem.

As the goals of publicly engaged scholarship become ever more deeply rooted in a values-based publishing paradigm, we envision a flourishing publishing landscape underpinned by radical inclusivity: inclusive of a broad range of voices, matched by a broad range of genres and formats. An ecology that is moving toward an alternative model of evaluation and career progression; one that recognizes public engagement, and all the knowledge and products emerging from that activity, just as much as publication.

**Author contribution.** Writing – original draft: C.C., D.F.-L., K.B.; Writing – review and editing: C.C., D.F.-L., K.B.; Conceptualization: D.F.

**Acknowledgments.** Our proposition, and what grounds this contribution to the Manifesto issue of *Public Humanities*, has grown out of the insights and activities of the members of the Publishing and the Publicly Engaged Humanities working group (<https://publishingandthepubliclyengagedhumanities.hcommons.org/>). Public Humanities work, and specifically publicly engaged humanities work encompasses research, teaching, and programming across the disciplines, conducted by college and university faculty, staff, and students in coequal, mutually beneficial partnership with community members and institutions. It is integral to humanities disciplinary work, advancing and deepening discourse on matters of shared concern.<sup>11</sup> At its best, it aspires to reciprocity, and redistribution – co-designed from the beginning to create new broader and more inclusive knowledge and resources that benefit all.<sup>12</sup> It is in this spirit of reciprocity and redistribution that we recognize and celebrate all contributions to the working group's activities that have made this manifesto possible.

**Funding statement.** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

**Conflicts of Interest.** The authors declare none.

## References

- Burton, Antoinette, Jenny L. Davis, and Margaret L. Brennan. 2024. *Reciprocity and Redistribution: Methodologies for Rethinking Public and Community-Based Humanities Research*. The Routledge Companion to Public Humanities Scholarship. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003248125-5>.
- Burton, Kath, Catherine Cocks, Darcy Cullen, Daniel Fisher-Livne, Barry M. Goldenberg, Janneken Smucker, Friederike Sundaram, Dave Tell, Anne Valks, and Rebecca Wingo. 2021a. "Public Humanities and Publication: A Working Paper." <https://hcommons.org/deposits/item/hc:37487/>.
- Burton, Kath, Catherine Cocks, Rebecca Kennison, and Bonnie Russell. 2021b. "Publishing Values-Based Scholarly Communication." <https://doi.org/10.17613/wd1g-hz37>. <https://publiclyengagedpublishing.org>.
- Ellison, Julie, and Eatmon. 2008. "Scholarship in Public: Knowledge Creation and Tenure Policy in the Engaged University."
- Fisher-Livne, Daniel, and Michelle May-Curry, eds. 2024. *The Routledge Companion to Public Humanities Scholarship*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003248125>.
- HuMetrics HSS Initiative. 2022. "Walking the Talk: Toward a Values-Aligned Academy." HuMetrics HSS Initiative. <https://hcommons.org/deposits/objectshc:44632/datastreams/CONTENT/content>. <https://doi.org/10.17613/06sf-ad45>.
- MLA. 2022. "Guidelines for Evaluating Publicly Engaged Humanities Scholarship in Language and Literature Programs." MLA. <https://www.mla.org/content/download/187094/file/Guidelines-Evaluating-Public-Humanities.pdf>.
- Nieves, Angel David. 2022. "'For the Master's [DH] Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House': An Alternative Primer for a Critical Black DH Praxis." *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 16 (3). <https://digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/16/3/000633/000633.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Fisher-Livne and May-Curry 2024 and Ellison and Eatmon 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Burton, Davis, and Brennan 2024.

- Rosenblum, Brian, Dave Tell, Sylvia Fernández, Kaylen Dwyer, and Sarah Bishop. 2024. "The Public Digital Humanities Institute - A National Endowment for the Humanities Institute to Support Academic & Community Collaborations in the Digital Humanities." Working Paper. <https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/handle/1808/34893>.
- Ruediger, Dylan, and Ruby MacDougall. 2023. "Are the Humanities Ready for Data Sharing?" Ithaka S+R. <https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.318526>.
- Sundaram, Friederike. 2021. "Public Humanities and Digital Publishing Are Meant For Each Other." supDigital (blog). 2021. <https://blog.supdigital.org/public-humanities-and-digital-publishing-are-meant-for-each-other/>.
- Urberg, Michelle. 2020. "Digital Humanities Projects and Standards: Let's Get This Conversation Started!." *Information Services & Use* 40 (3): 213–24. <https://doi.org/10.3233/ISU-200097>.
- Williams, R. 1989. *The Politics of Modernism. Against the New Conformists*. Verso.

**Cite this article:** Fisher-Livne, Daniel, Kath Burton, and Catherine Cocks. 2025. "The Revolution Must Be Published: Toward a Radically Inclusive Publishing Ecology." *Public Humanities*, 1, e47, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1017/pub.2024.18>