

DEGREE COURSES IN PUBLISHING AT BRITISH UNIVERSITIES

Fytton Rowland

The undergraduate and postgraduate courses in publishing at universities in the UK are described, some comparisons and contrasts between them are made, and an attempt is made to assess the general directions in which university education in publishing in this country is heading. This paper demonstrates that the content of the courses is highly relevant to the publishing industry, and is up to date and academically challenging.

Fytton Rowland is a lecturer in the Department of Information Science at Loughborough University, where he is Programme Tutor for the BA(Hons) programme in Publishing with English. He is Honorary Treasurer of the United Kingdom Association of Publishing Educators.

Introduction

Last year, an organisation was set up to facilitate contact, networking and exchange of experience between those academics who teach publishing in the UK. This organisation is called the United Kingdom Association of Publishing Educators (UKAPE)¹, and its chair is Professor Alistair McCleery of Napier University's Department of Print Media, Publishing and Communication. The secretary is Christine Hardy of the Department of Design, Nottingham Trent University, and I am the treasurer.

Thirteen universities teach publishing degree courses, four of them at postgraduate level only, three at undergraduate level only, and the remainder at both levels. The discipline "spread" of the departments where the subject is taught is wide. Some have developed from printing departments (London College of Printing, West Herts College and Napier); some were once "library schools" (Loughborough, Robert Gordon and Thames Valley); some are linked with art or design (Nottingham Trent, Oxford Brookes and Plymouth); one is a journalism department (City); and the remainder almost defy classification. Only three of the thirteen departments are in "old" universities (City, Loughborough and Stirling).

The curriculum and structure of the courses offered reflects to some extent the origins of the departments — this is particularly true of those of "printing" and "library" origins. Some of the diversity also reflects the different parts of the publishing industry at which they aim — general trade publishing or STM, books or magazines. There are signs, however, that the courses are converging under the impact of developing technology.

The recently founded Institute of Publishing², which aims to be the professional institution for publishing professionals in the UK,

does not offer any accreditation scheme for university course, in contrast with the Library Association and the Institute of Information Scientists.

The courses

The Publishing Training Centre at Book House produces an annual directory of the courses, and the 2000 edition of this directory³ was the main source used in preparing this article. The same organisation is itself responsible for the majority of in-service short courses for publishing staff, and it is appropriate and valuable that they also survey the university courses on a regular basis.

Universities offering postgraduate courses only

City University. The Department of Journalism at the City University in London offers an MA in Publishing Studies, open to students with a good upper second class degree in an appropriate discipline, or appropriate work experience as an alternative. This course may be taken on a part-time basis. If studied full-time this is a twelve-month course, and there are nine taught units and a dissertation. The nine units are entitled: Introduction to Publishing; Publishing as a Business; Publishing Law; Technical Publishing Knowledge; Marketing, Promotion and Sales Principles; Project Acquisition, Development and Management; International Issues; The Publishing Process; and Research Methods. Editing, design, printing, bibliography and information technology are all covered in the Technical Publishing Knowledge unit.

The same department, in collaboration with the Department of Information Science at the City University, also offers a master's degree course in Electronic Publishing.

University of Stirling. The well-established MPhil course in the Centre for Publishing Studies at Stirling requires an entry qualification of an upper second class honours degree in any subject. It is a one-year course and a part-time option does not appear to be available.

Compulsory elements include Contemporary Publishing, Production, Publishing Skills, and a dissertation of 15-20,000 words. Contemporary Publishing includes marketing, the editorial role, publishing business and finance, and legal

aspects; Production includes design and printing as well as Internet and web publishing; Publishing Skills includes copy-editing, proofreading, word processing, DTP and computer networking. The work includes individual and group projects in publishing, marketing and production.

University of Plymouth. The Faculty of Arts and Education at the University of Plymouth, actually situated in Exeter, offers a course leading to either a postgraduate diploma or an MA in Publishing. The admission requirement is a first degree in any subject. The diploma is a one academic year course, and to move on to the MA, a dissertation undertaken during the subsequent summer is added; a part-time option is not mentioned.

This course is largely based on investigations and projects rather than traditional teaching. The four compulsory modules are: The Publishing Process, in which the student makes a proposal for a paper or electronic publication and this is critically appraised; Publishing Skills, in which a magazine is examined from the design point of view and then the acquired skills are applied to another type of publication; Publishing Product and Business, a case study approach; and Professional Practice, based on a work placement.

Thames Valley University. An MA degree in Information Management (Publishing) is offered on either a full-time (one calendar year plus the dissertation) or part-time (two years) basis. The entry requirement is a first degree in a relevant subject or relevant experience. The philosophy of the course is that information is a commodity that should be managed like any other valuable resource. Some common modules are delivered to all the Information Management students and specialised modules for the different pathways, including Publishing, are also given.

Modules required are: DTP; Electronic Publishing; Exploitation of Media Information; IT; Management; Production Aspects of Publishing; Professional Issues; Research in Information Management. The dissertation may be based on a six-week work placement if it is connected with a project for a particular company.

Universities offering undergraduate degrees only

Loughborough University. The Department of Information Science offers a BA(Hons)

programme in Publishing with English, in three academic years, or four if a sandwich placement is undertaken in the third year; in the latter case, a Diploma in Professional Studies (DPS) is awarded in addition to the BA degree. The admission requirement is 20 points at 'A' level including at least a grade B in English (or equivalent). The programme is partially integrated with others in the same department, reflecting the view that boundaries between the information professions are tending to blur.

Compulsory publishing modules included in the programme are: Introduction to Publishing, Graphic Design and DTP, Publishing Design and Information Presentation, Publishing Production, Authors and Editors, Marketing for Publishers, The Information Industry, The Book Trade, The Magazine Business, and Publishing Law. It is compulsory to take some modules in the English department, and students are encouraged to include Creative Writing among these. In the final year, 25% of the marks for the year depend on an individual research project.

Middlesex University. A BA(Hons) programme in Writing & Publishing Studies is offered over three years. The admission requirement is 16 points at 'A' level. This programme takes a distinctive approach, regarding the writing and publishing activities as firmly linked, and setting its work within the historical and socio-cultural context of the culture industry. The University's modular scheme allows Writing & Publishing Studies to be combined with other subjects such as English & Literary Studies, Film Studies, Media & Cultural Studies, Law, History, or foreign languages, if the student wishes.

All students take modules on critical methodologies and research strategies before diverging on to different pathways that include marketing and editorial practices and a range of genres (horror, fiction, romance, etc.). Some students are offered the opportunity to transfer to a BA Writing programme, which includes journalism and creative writing. Visual and electronic media, including DTP, multimedia and web page design are included in the main programme. Work placements in the culture, publishing and media industries are strongly encouraged during the final year.

University of Luton. Luton offers a BA(Hons) degree in Media Practices with Publishing over

three years. The admission requirement is 12 points at 'A' level. The approach of this course is to look at the professional practices of the media and, combining theory with practical work throughout the course, to provide a grounding in how the media work and how media products shape our understanding of society. There is a group of compulsory modules dealing with communication and media subjects generally, and a group of modules specific to the publishing pathway.

The former group include theories of communication, the origins of the print media, myth-making in television and film, the role of the editor in the media, critical issues in communication, representation within the media, the visual image, law relevant to media and ethical issues which arise in professional practice. The latter group contains designing the copy, design for publishing, the professional publisher, the changing readership, editing and electronic editing, and publishing in other countries. There is also a work-based placement module which may be taken as a single or double option in year one or year two. The final-year project may be undertaken in publishing.

Universities offering both undergraduate and postgraduate publishing degrees

London Institute. Within the Institute, the School of Printing and Publishing at LCP (formerly the London College of Printing) offers a BA(Hons) course in Publishing. The admission criterion is two subjects at 'A' level. The programme seeks to develop professional careers in the book, magazine and new media publishing sectors of the international creative industries. The School is committed to state-of-the-art publishing production methods, technologies, editorial and marketing processes for book and magazine publishing.

Year one includes Publishing Production, the Publishing Industry, Marketing, and Digital Media Technology. Year two includes Marketing Strategy, Supply Chain Strategy, Business and Financial Policy, and Publishing Futures. Year three includes Design and DTP, Commissioning Editing, Electronic Publishing, and Managing People and Finance.

The School also offers postgraduate awards at

the PG Certificate, PG Diploma, and MA levels in both Publishing and Publishing Production.

Napier University. The Department of Print Media, Publishing and Communication offers BA (three years) and BA(Hons) (four years) courses in Publishing, which offer a broad base of publishing skills and knowledge covering the main publishing functions of editorial, production, marketing, electronic publishing, and business management. The entrance requirement is three grade Bs, one of which must be in English, in Scottish Highers, or a B and a C at 'A' level, one of which must be in English.

Year one includes Communications Skills, the Publishing Industry, Information Sources, Publishing Practice, Language and Media, Media Studies, and a research project. Year two includes Production Studies, Media Law, Editorial Function and Practice, Electronic Information and Society, and a publishing project. Year three includes Publishing Management 1, Pre-Press technology; Marketing; Press/Post-Press Technology; Graphic Design, a second publishing project, and two modules from a choice of six specialised publishing options. Year four for honours students includes Publishing Management 2; Issues in Publishing; a final-year dissertation; and four from eight advanced publishing options. Work experience is encouraged but not required.

Napier also offers a PG Diploma/MSc course, lasting one year full-time but also available on a part-time basis. It requires a good honours degree and/or relevant work experience, but is aimed mainly at recent graduates in disciplines other than publishing — work experience is not required. Core modules include: The Publishing Business; Issues in Editorial Practice; Digital Publishing; Production Processes; and Management in Publishing. Three out of eleven advanced specialised publishing modules must also be taken, and those students wishing to attempt the MSc must also complete a dissertation.

Nottingham Trent University. The Department of Design offers a BA(Hons) in Graphic Communications Management, which is designed to enable graduates to follow a variety of careers in publishing and print media, and develops both technological and managerial skills. This is a four-year sandwich course with an obligatory

third year working in a relevant placement post. The admission requirement is 16-18 points at 'A' level.

Year one includes: Communication and Media; a Multiple Media Workshop; Introduction to Publishing; and Materials. Year two includes: Marketing; Managing the Team; Print Buying; Colour; Information Systems; Publishing and Promotion Media. Year four includes: Direct marketing; Business Planning; Media Technology; Publishing Media; Marketing Communications Strategy; and a dissertation.

A postgraduate programme is also offered at the PG Certificate, PG Diploma, and MA levels. It is a one-year course and the admission requirement is a good honours degree in any subject. It aims to ensure that graduates without a background in publishing are equipped to pursue a publishing career. The coursework starts with a broad introduction to publishing, and then goes on to a practical phase in which each student produces a mock-up of a publishable piece of work together with a publishing proposal and print specification. To facilitate this, practical experience with software for design and page layout will be provided. In the second semester there are two threads: Management — including marketing, publishing, publishing law and intellectual property, finance, strategic issues and human resources management; and Electronic Publishing — process and technique of different applications, including production of an actual electronic publication. Finally a dissertation is required from MA candidates.

An alternative route to an MA degree — full- or part-time — is available for experienced publishing professionals. Each student negotiates their own programme during an initial six-week period; there is a substantial research element.

Oxford Brookes University. The most substantial portfolio of publishing programmes in the UK is offered by the School of Art, Publishing and Music at Oxford Brookes. There are BA(Hons) programmes, both single honours and joint honours, MA programmes in both Publishing and Electronic Media, an MBA in Publishing, and an MA in Education (Publishing).

The BA single honours programme has an entrance requirement of 20 points at 'A' level or equivalent. The joint honours may be joint with English, Business, Visual Studies, Computing or

other subjects, and requires 18 points. In the first year single honours students take five or six publishing modules, while joint honours students take three. In years two and three the single honours students have a wide choice but will probably take three specialist streams chosen from: Editorial; Marketing; Production/Design; and Management for the Publishing Environment. In years two and three, joint honours students have a wide choice but must take two advanced publishing modules in at least one of the four specialist streams. Students must also complete a double dissertation wholly in publishing or, in the case of joint honours, it may be partly in their other field of study. All publishing students must take a module in New Title Development, and are also encouraged to complete an independent study in an area of particular personal interest. Relevant work experience is encouraged but not required.

The MA/PG Dip programme in Publishing takes one year full-time or two years part-time, and the entrance requirement is a good honours degree in any subject, or equivalent. There is a compulsory introductory module and a total of at least eight modules must be taken. Some, on Editorial Techniques, Production, Marketing, and Management, are specifically delivered to postgraduates, while others may be chosen from the undergraduate modules. The majority take an Electronic Publishing module, and students are encouraged to undertake an industry-related independent study or project. For the MA to be awarded, a dissertation must also be completed. Work experience is encouraged but not obligatory; for full-time students it can take place during the Christmas and Easter vacations.

The alternative postgraduate programme in Electronic Media is of a similar structure. There are two compulsory introductory modules, on the Theory and Practice of Electronic Media, and Integrating Electronic Media. Other modules that may be chosen include Electronic Text, Multimedia Publishing, Digital Image, and Audio Media.

The MBA programme requires a DMS or prior experience, and is directed towards young managers who want to take an MBA, but would prefer one focused on the publishing industry. If the student already has the DMS (s)he may proceed directly to a major dissertation on a

publishing topic, related to their own job. If a DMS is not already held, it should be undertaken first at Oxford Brookes's School of Business. Finally, accreditation through previous learning or experiential learning may be granted, in which case some taught modules followed by the dissertation will satisfy the requirements.

The MA in Education (Publishing) is offered jointly with the School of Education and is designed for experienced teachers, lecturers, educational officials, teacher trainers and educational publishers. UK/EU students may take it full- or part-time, but it is particularly suitable for full-time study by students from developing or transitional economies. Students must pass at least nine modules, of which Professional Development and Profiling, and Developing Educational Research are compulsory. At least two Publishing modules must be chosen, and the dissertation must be on a publishing-related topic.

Robert Gordon University. Undergraduate and postgraduate degrees are offered by the School of Information and Media, and the postgraduate programme can be taken wholly or partly by distance learning.

The BA degree in Publishing Studies requires three years or four for honours in the usual Scottish pattern. The entrance requirement is a B in English and two other Cs in Scottish Highers, or in English 'A' level terms 16 points with at least a C grade in English. The programme looks at publishing from a business perspective. The content includes a thorough grounding in electronic publishing. Years one and two require six publishing course units to be taken each year; year three requires four publishing course units plus a mandatory six-week industrial placement, and year four for honours students requires three twenty-credit focal studies and a dissertation.

The MSc/PG Cert/PG Dip programme in Publishing Studies in its part-time mode extends over three years, with one year leading to the Certificate, two to the Diploma and three to the master's degree. If undertaken full-time the programme takes one calendar year. The entrance requirement is a good honours degree and assessment is by coursework only. It is possible to undertake the entire programme by distance learning, and students may switch between this mode and campus attendance during the course.

The content of year one includes Editorial Processes, Book Marketing, Information Handline and Production, and Specialist Publishing. Year two includes Electronic Publishing, Consumer Publishing, Book Trade Resource Management, and Research methods. Year three is occupied by the dissertation for the MSc. Full-timers must undertake a four-week work placement in semester two.

West Herts College. The Watford School of Publishing within the Faculty of Visual Communication offers BSc(Hons) and postgraduate diploma courses of the University of Hertfordshire. The former Watford College has a long history of involvement in printing and publishing education, and the undergraduate degree course was founded in 1964.

The BSc(Hons) course in Graphic Media Studies (Publishing major pathway) requires two 'A' levels or a merit profile of GNVQ/ND for entry; mature holders of an HND may be admitted directly to year two or exceptionally to the final year of the course. Year one is a foundation year covering publishing, design, media, business, production studies, and technology. Year two offers a twin study route, the publishing element covering production and management of projects, electronic publishing, and writing for the media. The second strand may be media, business, or printing. Year three is a full year's paid industrial placement, though some students omit this and proceed directly to the final year of study. Year four continues the twin study approach, with the publishing element including publishing management, strategic marketing, multimedia, and a project, and again media, business, or printing forming the other strand.

There are two postgraduate diploma courses, one in Publishing and one in Journalism, Advertising and Radio. Both require a good honours degree or relevant previous experience, and the Journalism course also requires an interview. Both courses occupy 25 weeks if undertaken full-time; the Journalism course may be taken part-time over two years. Assessment is by coursework only. Students have access to industry-standard equipment and software

The content of the Publishing diploma comprises: Editorial Work (commissioning, desk

editing, rights, permissions, and contracts; all for books, journals, magazine and electronic media); Marketing and Sales (publicity, promotional writing, and distribution); Publishing Business (finance, budgeting, costing and estimating); Production; Design; Multimedia Production (CD-ROMs and the Internet). The Journalism diploma includes Promotional writing, scripts, journalism, and report writing; Production processes in printing and multimedia; Editing, proofreading. Legal aspects, copyright, libel, etc.; Radio writing and production; Designing for printing and multimedia.

Conclusion

Examination of the content of the different publishing courses described above suggests that they mostly try to combine a grounding in the basic skills of publishing — such as editing, management, design, production, marketing, and IT, especially DTP, electronic publishing and web page design — with some deeper reflection about the place of publishing and the media and cultural industries in general in the life of society. The methods by which this is done vary quite markedly, from fairly traditional approaches based on lectures and practical classes assessed by coursework and perhaps examinations, to an investigative project-based approach. All the courses except for postgraduate diplomas include some kind of research dissertation or final-year project, and most offer work placements as either a compulsory or an optional part of the course.

Nevertheless one can see some demarcation between those programmes that lean towards the creative, literary end of publishing, and those whose primary emphasis is more on the technical and professional, information-publishing end of the industry. Those programmes which emphasise the creative end of the publishing industry are more likely to be taught within departments dealing with the creative arts, and those emphasising more the links with the other information professions are likely to be found in Information Studies departments.

Understandably, too, those housed in printing colleges are likely to lay more emphasis on the technical issues of production than those found in other environments. There is also some variation in the degree of connection with the other media

industries such as newspapers, television and radio, and academically the extent to which there is overlap with Communications and Media Studies.

The courses in publishing in UK universities have been evolving and changing rapidly in recent years, reflecting the technological changes affecting the publishing, media and information industries that they serve. One can predict that change will continue. With the increasing importance of electronic publishing, the courses from different origins may become more similar, especially where IT-related modules such as web page design and DTP are concerned. The distinction between those departments that emphasise the cultural and creative aspects of publishing, and those which see a greater importance of occupationally related technical and professional information, may be expected to persist. This perhaps reflects the dichotomy between the humanities, on the one hand, and science and technology, on the other, in society as a whole.

It is perhaps unfortunate that, unlike other

professionally-related subjects taught in higher education, publishing lacks an organisation that can accredit university degree courses and thus give them the collective approval of members of the profession. The survey of courses carried out by the Publishing Training Centre and summarised above seems to show that the courses are of an academically challenging standard and yet highly relevant to the modern publishing industry. Personally, I regret the decision of the Institute of Publishing not to undertake accreditation activity.

References

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