

way that will be more broadly applicable to the disciplines of theatre and performance studies. This kind of close analysis may work for a journal article, or for a specialist publisher, but will rarely be comprehensive enough for a book-length monograph at a larger scholarly press, and editors will often suggest to authors of such texts that additional examples be included and the examination widened.

ON THE CONFERENCE CIRCUIT

Because a finished book is an object that requires careful handling, storing, and shipping, publishers are cautious when organizing conference exhibitions. Authors (and readers) need to know that there are financial implications involved with shipping and displaying books, and all these factors must be considered as a publisher decides which events to attend and how many books to bring to those events. If books are damaged during shipping and handling to and from a conference, they cannot be sold later and must be destroyed; this too must be factored into any decision to attend and display titles.

That said, publishers and their editorial teams don't just attend conferences to sell books; they also want to know that a conference's participants are interested in their titles and pleased that they are there. Often we know which conferences are important in our field and should be attended each year, but we also rely on our authors to let us know about important new events and on attendees to let us know our presence matters to them. A conference book exhibit offers a wonderful space for editors to see authors they know and to meet new people, to hear new book ideas, to discuss the state of the field, and, frankly, just to have a good chat. So at your next conference, don't be shy: please do visit our displays, meet with editors, and see what's new. Even if you don't buy, it's very useful for us to make contact, and that contact makes it worth the effort to bring our books and products to the conference.

For an academic publisher it is not a matter of making a profit, but if each book can pay its own way, the firm will remain healthy and able to publish and contribute further to our shared discipline. Ours is a delicate balance between funding and publishing: working together, publisher and author can create and nurture a strong balance among the needs of the finished book, the needs of its market, and the needs of our readership.

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New Roles for Scholarly Publishers: "Theater Historiography," the Web Site
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THE STORY OF THEATER HISTORIOGRAPHY

The launch of the Web site "Theater Historiography" by the University of Michigan Press in 2011 reflects what we see as the changing role of the university

press in the digital era. Following on the heels of *Theater Historiography: Critical Interventions*, the collection of essays that spawned it, the site was envisioned by Henry Bial of the University of Kansas, Scott Magelssen of Bowling Green State University, and the Press as “a gathering place for theater students and scholars to share ideas and tools.”¹ Among the site’s features are a blog, course syllabi, video clips, book reviews, and photos, and there are plans for further additions in the near future.

The twenty-plus contributors to the book were the first to participate, offering posts called “What Was I Thinking?”: blog entries that enlarge upon their essays in the book and describe the thinking behind the essays. The site quickly expanded from there to the broader disciplinary community, inviting anyone with commentary or other content related to the study or profession of theatre history to contribute. The most popular feature of the site so far has been the Faculty Club, which offers a range of syllabi, teaching prompts, and other fun stuff (e.g., Brian Herrera’s theatre history crossword puzzle) that can be used in undergraduate and graduate courses. The site also offers meditations on graduate education, pedagogy/performance as activism, theatrical production, and theory and practice, among other topics, as well as video content ranging from Richard Schechner’s talk on “The Conservative Avant-Garde” to a University of Kansas student production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* that retained original Elizabethan pronunciation. The editors and the assistant editor, Oona Hatton, welcome your ideas and contributions.

Theater-historiography.org is one of a series of digital initiatives that the University of Michigan Press is currently exploring. In 2009 the Press became an organizational unit of the University of Michigan Library, a move reflecting a broader trend toward greater collaboration between academic libraries and presses in an era of change within scholarly publishing that has seen a steady decline in print along with a growing demand for electronic access and new forms of digital scholarship. The move not only brought the Press new colleagues from the Library’s MPublishing division (librarians and Web mavens with skill sets that complement our own) but also inspired new ways of thinking about our role in scholarly communication and the dissemination of research. Like many presses, we offer most of our frontlist titles in print and digital formats and across various reading platforms. A number of these books come with digital enhancements (additional chapters, data sets, illustrations, video links) through our Web site. Select titles have been posted for commentary online before publication, and we are also working in nontraditional formats with scholarship that is born digital—that is, research designed to be seen and shared in nonbook form.

WHAT WERE WE THINKING?

Innovations in digital publishing technologies and the rapid growth of online social networks suggest that publishers recognize the interconnectedness of the press and its authors, readers, reviewers—the communities within which we operate—and even our connections with other publishers.² Michigan began to think differently about its major publishing fields and its relative role within them, in

order to conceive of our community more broadly while we work to deepen our commitments to the disciplines in which we publish. One result of such effort has been to develop and host digital, interactive, disciplinary-based communities such as Theater-historiography.org in collaboration with the Library, our authors, and the broader community of scholars and students. Although these Web sites serve to call attention to Michigan's list of books, and though books remain our chief *raison d'être*, the goals for the Web site are not primarily commercial. The Press and its authors designed Theater-historiography.org as a "skill-free zone"³ that encourages community and collaboration over marketing concerns, a philosophy further reflected in the site's links to publications by other presses. These links include book reviews and journal articles (e.g., Kim Solga's editorial for "The Activist Classroom: Performance and Pedagogy," a special issue of *Canadian Theatre Review*, published by the University of Toronto Press). In addition, Michael O'Hara and Judith Sebesta have created a video blog about the creation of their digital textbook *Explore Theatre*, published by Pearson.⁴

With the launch of Theater-historiography.org and plans for several new Web sites under way, the University of Michigan Press hopes to play a role in defining the scholarly communication pathways of the future. It's not surprising to find the innovative thinking and writing of scholars of theatre and performance at the forefront of these efforts.

ENDNOTES

1. "Theater Historiography: A Gathering Place for Theater Students and Scholars to Share Ideas and Tools," www.theater-historiography.org.

2. Richard Nash and Mike Shatzkin have spoken and written extensively about the future of book publishing in the digital era. Richard Nash's blog can be found at <http://rmash.com/> and Mike Shatzkin's at www.idealogy.com/blog/.

3. "About the Site," at www.theater-historiography.org/about/.

4. Video accessible via "On Creating an All-Digital Theatre Textbook," at www.theater-historiography.org/2012/04/24/on-creating-an-all-digital-theatre-textbook/.