

**Making Space for Publication:
A Case Study of Project Space**

by

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Abstract

The proliferation of digital technologies has initiated a need for radical changes to publishing business models, while simultaneously laying the foundation for a renaissance of the print book akin to that which occurred in the 1960s and 70s. This “second wave of self-publishing” has come about as a widespread surge, particularly in the realm of contemporary art and graphic design, but also in literary and DIY circles. As was the case in the “first wave,” this expansion has resulted in the development of brick-and-mortar spaces that house and nurture the activities of this niche, particularly the production of publications, exhibitions and additional programming (such as lectures and workshops). These hubs act as nodes on a decentralized network of local and global publishing activity that is increasingly connected via the internet. The case study of Project Space — a publisher, bookshop, project space, and studio in the Chinatown neighbourhood of Vancouver, British Columbia (operated by OCW Arts & Publishing Foundation in collaboration with Project Space Studio) — explores the development of such a space, with particular interest in the past and present context that have produced the need the space seeks to fulfill.

Keywords: Project Space; artists' books; zines; magazines; art; self-publishing

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1. Introduction

In the age of digitization, the longevity of print publishing is often questioned. Technologies such as ebooks, the digital newsstand, online magazines and newspapers, blogs, social media, e-newsletters, and apps have created an almost entirely new terrain for publishers to navigate. As the industry becomes increasingly digitized, publishers' jobs are said to become much easier: no more hefty printing, distribution, or warehousing costs; easy access to a global market; no more guessing on print runs; and print-on-demand technology for when the consumer requires a hard copy. This incentive has sent big publishers scrambling to be the first to define a successful business model while the smaller ones scurry to keep up, desperate not to fall into irrelevance. However, on the fringes of all of this frenzy — particularly in places where traditional publishing overlaps with the visual arts and graphic design — an entirely different attitude toward publishing has emerged.

In the introduction to *Turning Pages: Editorial Design for Print Media*, Andrew Losowsky reflects on how print media's leading figures have declared that the industry was in a "moment of transition" since at least the 1980s (2010). For over thirty years publishers have grappled with the continual production of "new, increasingly limitless devices for experiencing and interpreting information," as well as the shifting roles and transfers of power that have occurred alongside these changes (Losowsky 2010). Our relationship to published content is now mitigated by individuals and companies that range from content producers and device makers to content hosts and filters. The traditional print publishing business model is no longer reliable and print no longer holds such a place of privilege among other media channels: "in bed or on the toilet, people are just as likely to look at a screen as to read a printed page" (Losowsky 2010). The "near-ubiquity of internet access in the western world" has been a major challenge to "print's

[500-year long,] near monopoly on readable, distributed information,” causing digital evangelists to hail the coming death of print (Losowsky 2010).

But Losowsky isn't pessimistic about print's future; he sees today as “a hugely liberating time to be making books, magazines, and newspapers” (2010). A time when, ironically, the internet is the very thing that has “enhanced almost every aspect of the workflow,” from research and editorial to production and distribution. Despite the fact that an increase in digital reading material and platforms has decreased the number of books, magazines, and newspapers being printed today, he believes that a meaningful distinction can still be drawn between the screen and the page:

Amazing, incredible, fantastic things can be done on a screen, stories that print could never tell as effectively or memorably — but the crucial difference comes in what happens next. Once you have watched the video, clicked the link, interacted, and enjoyed, then the window is closed, the next link is clicked on, and at the end of the day, the screen is switched off. From nothing back to nothing, with no discernable footprint beyond a footnote in your internet history... If you pick up a book or a magazine or a newspaper, however, you are interacting with an object that was evoked in the real world, something with weight and sensation that contains something of the spirit in which it was created. The smell, the touch, the turn of one kind of page compared with another all have power and meaning in virtually every culture around the world. These are objects that exist, beyond when you put them down. They share our lives, for few minutes in our hands or on our bookshelves for decades. Their physical presence is part of their narrative.

Taking pleasure in the physical experience of a book is sometimes regarded as nostalgic, quaint or even the fetishisation of the print medium. There is some truth to this; it is also inaccurate to suggest that the screen is not a physical object. However, digitization not only increases the ephemeral nature of content, it also limits the definition of content to “text and images” and delineates this content from the object that is delivering it. In print, on the other hand, the design

and production choices — from layout, typography, paper stocks and inks, to format, scale, and printing and binding methods — are all elements that can be considered content. This content is as loaded and nuanced as text and image, and interacts with these privileged forms to bring added layers of meaning. However, the argument for print is not in opposition to digital publishing. Digital publishing also has a number of design and production choices — even as basic as the choice of which device, platform, or media channel the content will be filtered through — that can also enable a publisher to effectively communicate a particular mood, meaning, or message. As Losowsky concludes: “Essentially, it comes down to this: The survival of the physical product only makes sense in those situations where its physicality is a deliberately curated part of its design” (2010). The key word being “deliberate,” as in, the deliberate — as opposed to default — choice to produce something in print, as well as deliberate editorial, production, and distribution choices to suit the purpose(s) of this object.

Before the internet, the costs involved in the various phases of print publishing — from content creation to production and distribution — were a major barrier for the layperson, maintaining the publisher’s position as gatekeeper. Now, “it has never been easier to experiment [in publishing] without having to risk or lose everything” (Losowsky 2010). Not only has the internet created an open space for creating and sharing digital content, it has also provided the opportunity for publishers to promote and sell print publications to an extensive, international network; easily offer print-on-demand services; as well as develop higher visibility and stronger connections with their readers, through such tools as social media and e-newsletters. This increasing ease with which one can produce print media has also prompted some to question whether print publishing will become watered down, turning into “a hobbyist pursuit” or an activity that produces horribly expensive luxury products (Losowsky 2010). However, among the pessimistic and pretentious reactions to this accessibility, Russell Davies of The Newspaper Club (which acts as a broker between newspaper manufacturers and self-publishers) sees opportunity:

The web lets us all be publishers, and short-run print will let us publish the things many of us have always loved — books, magazines, newspapers...objects and form factors that have evolved to do all sorts of things really well, but which have always been inaccessible to most people. In some ways this will reduce the specialness of print — less exclusive, less curated, less quality control — in others it'll make it more special — more personal, more relevant, more ours. And, I suspect, we'll discover new things we can do with print, things that just weren't economic before. And some of them will be wonderful. (Davies in Losowsky 2010)

While the saturation of activity that the internet has prompted may be threatening to the old guard, it allows for robust dialogue and a level of innovation that is much less frequent when an activity is relegated to a specialized subset of the population.

In today's publishing context, trade and mass-market publishers are faced with the death of print as they have known it. However, for specialized publishers or those who are creating work that is not market-driven — particularly cultural publishers, which have business models tailored to creating and mining niche markets, and which are largely subsidized by public and private funders — print is not dying, but is in a moment of transition that poses an exciting challenge and opportunity. As Losowsky concludes in his introduction to *Turning Pages*:

Twenty years ago, when the market was strong and when print was the only game in town, mediocrity was acceptable, even a legitimate business proposition. This isn't true anymore. If a print publication is going to survive the next five years, then it has to be clear, relevant, visually striking, and be obviously different from its competitors. It has to be deliberately, physically present, and if it wants to create a strong, connected readership then it must treat its print manifestation as a launch pad to a multi-format universe of its own creation. Never has it been a tougher time to create and maintain a successful print brand; never has it been a better time to be a

reader... This is truly a time of transition. It is a time of strong design and imaginative thinking, of creative technology and low barriers to entry. It means less print, and better print, a reduction in mediocrity and a greater appreciation of physical objects and what they can be... The true golden age of print? It's right now. (2010)

Losowsky's emphatic proclamation acts both as a predication and a call to action. Print publishers who are not adapting to context, new technologies and audience demands are not likely to survive. On the other hand, those who follow his call and treat their "print manifestation" as a "launch pad to a multi-format" publishing program, have the opportunity to endure by creating lasting meaning for their audiences.

While digital innovations in publishing have prompted some to question print's future, advances in technology have simultaneously created what many have called a "second wave of self-publishing" (though the "self" part is not always the best descriptor) — particularly in the realm of contemporary art and graphic design, but also in literary and DIY circles — much like that which occurred in the 1960s and 70s. AA Bronson, former Executive Director of Printed Matter (the world's largest non-profit organization dedicated to artists' publishing), has also witnessed this positive shift in the world of publication. He says that most people think of the book audience as older or dying and assume that it is only the baby boomers "who continue to buy books in a developed way":

But what we've found with Printed Matter is that about 65% of our audience is under 35 and a massive quantity of the audience is in their early 20s. So there is a very different phenomenon happening now. We sell about \$15,000 worth of books a week, so the place is crammed with people. It's very, very active and it's like there's a kind of book renaissance. (Bronson 2008)

The internet and a variety of digital tools have made production, distribution, and marketing more accessible than ever before, while simultaneously contributing to the development of a fairly

extensive network that relies on web-based and real-world infrastructure. In fact, it is likely that the roots of this second wave of self-publishing are dispersed across a set of highly networked online communities—and its continued proliferation can also be traced back to these same networks. Blogs and social media, particularly platforms such as Tumblr or Instagram, have undoubtedly contributed to the rising popularity and fascination with the print book in a community of artists, illustrators and graphic designers in particular; the more this group engages with massive quantities of ephemeral, on-screen work, the more precious the book becomes as an artifact of a culture that is deeply entrenched in the online world. Operating in a sort of feedback loop, the internet can be seen as a sort of repeating catalyst: As these publications and the activities surrounding them appear online, it prompts an increase in production, exhibitions, fairs, and discourse, which are then documented online, resulting in another burst of growth in this decentralized network.

Project Space — a non-profit arts organization dedicated to publication as an artistic medium — operated a multipurpose project space (bookshop, gallery, and studio) in a storefront at 222 E Georgia Street in Vancouver’s Chinatown from 2011 to 2013 in response to this context. The space also served as the site of readings, book and magazine launches, fundraisers and other events, and served as the office for Project Space Press and *OCW Magazine*. During this period the organization acted as one node on a local and global decentralized network — with its brick-and-mortar presence, online, and real-world activities — establishing a hub for this community while simultaneously contributing to its growth. In order to document and further understand this burgeoning niche, this report examines the historical framework and present situation that form the context that birthed Project Space, and presents a case study of its former storefront operation. Though currently “Project Space” is the doing-business-as name of the non-profit OCW Arts & Publishing Foundation, from 2011 to 2013 it was the name of this storefront operation; therefore,

for clarity the remainder of this report will refer to the organization as OCW and the storefront as Project Space.

Project Space was located on a stretch of Georgia Street that has become a nascent site for cultural activity — now home to such artist-run centres as Access Gallery, Publication Studio, 221A and Centre A. The distinctive setting features buildings and large signage in brick, teal, orange, red, and yellow; is only one block long, sheared off at each end by Main Street to the West and Gore Street to the East; and, increasingly over the past five years, has become a site of gentrification and home to a number of new businesses (that range from high-end to non-profit) and condo developments that are nestled between the Chinese benevolent societies, bakeries, butchers, grocers, bookshops, general stores and produce stands the area is known for. Project Space occupied a 450-square-foot portion of a 6,600-square-foot building at 222 E Georgia Street that is a social enterprise operated by the artist-run centre 221A (located directly across the street); the building comprises two storefronts, two floors of studio spaces and a basement for storage.

The storefront of the 222 building was divided into two portions, the smaller of which housed Project Space and the larger of which was and continues to be occupied by Access Gallery. The two spaces have a wall running between them, but share an open doorway right at the entrance to the building. To the unfamiliar, the spaces appear as though they might be one entity — particularly as both have very subtle signage and little street presence. The stark gallery lighting in Project Space, combined with the art books and objects that filled the room, often provoked passersby to stop, look in, and wonder what was going on inside. On one wall were a number of narrow white shelves, made out of slices of wooden shipping pallets, displaying colourful books of various sizes that were positioned with their covers facing out. Down the middle of the room were tables, also covered in books, and on the opposite wall a current exhibition would be

presented. At the back of the room was a studio, made up of four desks and chairs, an old Risograph printer and a small retail desk. When a visitor walked in, they would often ask: “What is this place?” The response, “Project Space,” was not a very satisfying answer, as it is a literal name — used for art spaces that are alternatives to a conventional gallery — that is commonly used in the art community, but is practically unknown elsewhere. Often visitors would ask: Is this a bookshop? An art gallery? Did Project Space publish these books? Are they for sale? Can they hire Project Space to help them with a book they want to publish? All of these questions received a response that is a variation on “Yes.”

In 2013, the Project Space storefront was closed and the organization moved into a modest studio at 236 E Pender Street (behind UNIT/PITT Gallery, in a building that operates under a similar model to 222). Since 2013, it has redirected its energy to its Vancouver Art/Book Fair project (est. 2012), an annual publication produced by Project Space Press, and Monthly Open Studio events.

1.1 Defining Publication

The concept of “publication” distinct from “publishing” was put forth by Matthew Stadler, co-founder of Publication Studio, in his keynote speech at Richard Hugo House’s writers’ conference, Finding Your Audience in the 21st Century. He defines publication as “the creation of a public” and “an essentially political act”:

This public, which is more than a market, is created by deliberate acts. The circulation of texts, discussions and gatherings in physical space, the maintenance of a digital commons — together these construct a space of conversation that is a public space, which beckons a public into being. (2010)

He goes on to include in the definition of publication: the circulation of books, the book as public space (“where all are welcome and all come in on equal terms”), the creation of circumstances in

which audiences can “talk and contend together” (such as “physical gatherings, whether for dinner and conversation or for rioting and protest”), and digital dialogue. He also is clear about what publication is not: “the sale of books...the pursuit of beauty or the creation of a record or an archive. It’s not simply a tool for transmitting information” (Stadler 2010).

In his definition, Stadler echoes Losowsky, tossing out the concept of the book as simply a vessel and reinforcing the need for deliberate acts, multi-dimensional activity, and a deep and meaningful connection with readers. Stadler then clarifies the concept of publication by outlining its distinction from both hobbyist publishing and the publishing industry:

Publication requires consistency. You don’t just do it once, you are there to do that again, again and again. Publication requires fidelity and good follow through. The quick changes, the premium on novelty, the need for a next debut novelist once the last one is moved tiresomely onto their second novel, is not a happy companion to publication. Publication requires transparency. And last, and in some ways in summary, publication requires relationships and conversation. The nature of a public is not one way. It is not the provision of material to be consumed. The nature of a public is a two-way, three-way, multiple-way conversation that is reciprocal, that requires listening as well as speaking, and requires deliberate strategies in order to maintain or cultivate these conditions. (Stadler 2010)

These distinctions emphasize both the deliberate strategy inherent to publication, as well as commitment to the ideals of consistency, authenticity, reciprocity, and openness to continual redefinition of one’s mission and activities in relation to audience. Stadler adds that:

Publication should be cheap, non-exclusive and easy to do. Don’t fear the coming pluralism. The vastness and variety of books and of publics of legitimate conversations — none of which assume the place of the single conversation, of the best, of the pinnacle

that we all must look at — is in fact a very rich ecology that makes for a healthy literary culture of innovation and production. (2010)

Stadler emphasizes that an increase in publishing activity will not water down the quality of work produced, but will instead lead to a stronger network that is able to produce more work that garners deeper cultural significance. He goes on to assert that a publisher can create meaningful work that is needed, even if they produce limited numbers of books, in small runs, that are distributed to modest-sized audiences (qualities that ignore the established print business model, based on economies of scale, thereby threatening the perceived relevance of such publishing programs). Stadler also offers a counter-intuitive — but potentially liberating — revelation that “literary culture and its economy have never been made better by convincing non-readers that they ought to buy books” (2010). This truism offers publishers the opportunity to be true to their voices, their values, and their publics without wasting energy on inauthentic attempts to attain wider appeal.

Despite the realm of possibility Stadler describes as available to publishers of all types and sizes, many are still discouraged by the ways in which their practices diverge from traditional methods of publishing. In response to this, Stadler asks, “So what discourages us?” and provides his answer to the question:

One, we are dwarfed by numbers. Numbers implied by the phrase “mainstream.”

Dwarfed by this impression that our public is small, is a *coterie*, and a larger public exists outside of us that is authoritative. We often perceive our own work as underground or alternative to something that is dominant or normative. We become positioned — and in many cases deliberately position ourselves — as peripheral to something that is called central. We perceive ourselves as outside of a process in which we think there are insiders. We often take on the category of “self-publishing” or its more virtuous cousin

“DIY.” In contrast to something we then call “real publishing.” I reject all of those dichotomies. (2010)

Stadler’s definition of publication validates work that can be overlooked or not taken seriously (by the publisher, the publishing community, or the public) because of the dichotomies he describes. His definition relies upon publication that sees itself beyond these dichotomies, “not only as a means to dispel the power of the myth of the mainstream, but also to reclaim the space in which we imagine ourselves and our own collectivity” (Stadler 2010). Publication is, therefore, a set of activities and values, paired with a radical framework for viewing publishing activities without regard to numbers.

1.2 Orienting Publication in a Canadian Context

In order to orient the idea of “publication” — as defined by Stadler — in Canada, one must acknowledge that London-born Losowsky and Stadler both work out of the United States (New York and Portland, respectively). Publication seeks to describe publishing activities that are acts of cultural production, not responses to a market. This is a more radical idea in the US or the UK, “where markets for books and other cultural products entirely supported by sales have been established” (Lorimer 1994); however, in Canada, publishing has operated largely outside of the market since the industry took root in the 1970s, “when the importance of local voices and cultural development was being stressed” (Lorimer 1994). As Rowland Lorimer says in his article “What makes publishers publish? Not always the market”:

The possibility of turning a profit on a publishing program of trade titles published anywhere in Canada for the domestic market, even if a healthy percentage of them makes the national bestseller lists, is next to impossible. A judgment based on market forces would close down Canadian publishing on Canadian topics altogether. Faced with an open market and lively competition from the UK and US, Canadian book publishing is fairly much a non-starter. Does this mean that Canadians should be deprived of creative

Canadian writing and the addressing of issues of concern to Canadians in book form?
(1994)

In other words, it would be practically impossible for Canada's publishing industry to exist without substantial subsidizing by the Canada Council for the Arts and other funding bodies (such as provincial, municipal, and other public and private funders). Lorimer's observations of publishing in Canada — written almost ten years ago — reflect elements in Stadler's description of publication:

For the most part, the factors central to decisions to publish are located within the political, social and cultural realms focusing on the expansion of knowledge, the dissemination of information and education. What we have is a social practice that is organized around factors other than market mechanisms. Elements of this practice, specifically sales and distribution, can benefit from an understanding of normal market and consumer behaviour, but such dynamics do little to explain what drives the system as a whole. (1994)

Lorimer discovered some of publishers' motives through research of Saskatchewan's book industry in the fall of 1992 and spring of 1993: "to publish Canadian and Saskatchewan writers and to encourage the development of new writers," "to make an ideological statement," "to make such publications maximally accessible to the public," "to [support] experiments with new genres and new writers," "to add to the record of Saskatchewan history and literature," and, ultimately, "to ensure that certain information, ideas and sensibilities are made available to the public"; "These commitments exist outside market considerations" (1994). Lorimer's descriptions of publishing activity in Saskatchewan — which was intended as a sampling indicative of the larger Canadian publishing context — echoes Stadler's definition of publishing as "the creation of a public" (which is "more than a market"), and which is, inherently, a "political act" (Stadler 2010).

1.3 Evidence of Publication's Broader Cultural Significance Today

Evidence of the prominence and cultural relevance of publication can be seen in the *Millennium Magazines* exhibition that opened in February 2012 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, organized by Rachael Morrison and David Senior, in response to the fact that: “Throughout the twentieth century, innovations in international avant-garde visual arts and design were often first expressed in the informal context of a magazine or journal” (*Millennium Magazines* website 2012). The exhibition draws from the Museum Library's holdings to explore “the various ways in which contemporary artists and designers use the magazine as an experimental space” in the twenty-first century:

The works on view, all published since 2000, represent a broad array of international titles — from community newspapers to image-only photography magazines to conceptual design projects. These publications illustrate a diverse range of image-making, editing, design, printing, and distribution practices. There are connections to the past lineage of artists' magazines and the little architecture and design magazines of the twentieth century, as well as unique applications of new image-editing and printing methods. Assembled here, these contemporary magazines provide a firsthand view of the latest practices in art and design in print and represent MoMA Library's sustained effort to document and collect this medium. (*Millennium Magazines* website 2012).

In this exhibition, contemporary art gatekeeper MoMA acknowledges the cultural significance and relevance of these publications, supporting Stadler's view that these activities do not need to be seen as dichotomous to, and therefore inferior to, larger-scale publishing. Some may argue that celebration based on acceptance from a gatekeeper is in contrast to the values of publication, or that this acknowledgement moves this type of activity into the mainstream, watering down its significance; however, *Millennium Magazines* serves as a valuable snapshot of publishing activity at a certain moment in time, a hub in which a viewer can engage with publication produced in

disparate communities across the world, and an indication of the scope of this global decentralized network.

In November 2015, MoMA assigned further legitimacy to publication activity that is often described as “DIY” or “underground,” that revolves around the creation of “zines” and other temporal projects and events, through its restaging of *The Newsstand* as part of its 30th annual *New Photography* exhibition. Initiated by Kevin Kearney and Jamie Falkowski of Alldayeveryday¹, with support from artist, community organizer and photographer Lele Saveri², *The Newsstand* was a project space that repurposed an abandoned magazine kiosk at the intersection of Brooklyn’s Lorimer and Metropolitan subway stations. Operating from June 2013 to January 2014, it displayed a variety of zines and print ephemera, and also hosted an ongoing series of public programs that engaged a variety of artists. In MoMA, a replica of the modest space — operated by some of the same volunteers (often artists and photographers) who maintained the original — displayed copies of the same zines and ephemera that were initially featured in the project.

Another indicator of this network’s vastness — and the loyalty of those within it — is Motto Books, which was launched in 2007 by Alexis Zavialoff as one of the first distribution systems for magazines and fanzines in Switzerland. Today Motto works with over 100 publishers and 100 stores around the world, and its list of publications has reached over 3,000 titles and continues to grow. The company’s website says that the “interest in books and smaller self-published items came naturally,” reflecting the authenticity of the endeavour, which grew organically alongside a perceived need. Motto’s distribution is unique in that it recognizes that these book objects are

¹ Alldayeveryday is a New York-based creative agency that works in the realms of publishing and entertainment.

² In addition to having his photographs featured in the *New Photography* exhibition, Saveri is the Founder of 8-Ball Zines, which publishes zines, produces exhibitions and events, and hosts zine fairs in New York City billiard halls. Saveri was also a presenter at the 2015 Vancouver Art/Book Fair.

timeless and collectible, unlike traditional media; as such, one of their main focuses is to provide back issues of selected magazines, in addition to their wide selection of artists' publishing and experimental projects (which often have very small print runs). In addition to its distribution program, Motto regularly organizes events, "with a particular eye for art school environments and art spaces," but also collaborates with libraries and institutions. Since launching in 2007, Motto hosted temporary, travelling bookshops, but in 2008 Motto began opening permanent bookshops in Berlin, Brussels, Zürich, and Vancouver. With its multi-dimensional contributions to this community of publishers and readers, Motto acts as a crucial piece of infrastructure that has contributed to the emergence, sustainability, and growth of this network.

2. Tracing Publication from Past to Present

Stadler's definition of publication resonates with publishing activities and attitudes that have roots in the 1960s and 70s, when political climates stirred resistance and printing technologies became increasingly available to the layperson. In order to understand publication as it exists today, it is useful to trace back three particular streams of publishing activities that were essentially disparate but often crossed paths: (1) Artists' publishing (2) Literary publishing and (3) Zine making.

In order to understand the historical context that led to Stadler's definition of publication, one must attempt to define these three factions, which at times produced similar work and discourse despite existing in relative isolation from one another. These definitions, however, can be harmful if they are used as a set of rules by which one can label a booklet of artistic work (if it is even in booklet form). Instead, the label chosen by the artist/publisher — whether it be “book,” “magazine,” “chapbook,” “zine,” or something else entirely — should be viewed as a tool that provides more information about the context in which the work was created than about the object itself.

The ideas that Stadler put forward cannot be traced back historically along a neat and tidy string. Instead, they have messy, tangled roots that branch off into artists' publishing, literary publishing, and zine-making (which each also have messy, tangled histories that have been informed by each others'). Further complicating this, is the notion of “self-publishing,” which today can refer to authors bringing their own work (usually traditional fiction, non-fiction or poetry books) to the trade marketplace independently (without the intermediary of a publisher), but is also often used to describe work situated outside the marketplace that is produced independently by artists, writers and graphic designers. In this discussion, “self-publishing” is defined as the latter.

To understand publication one needs to see beyond labels, even while using them when the language available falls short. In other words, in order to discuss “publication,” labels like self-publishing, micro press, small press, artists’ publishing, literary publishing and zine making need to be used; however, a deep understanding of how these interrelate and contribute to a grander notion of “publication” requires one to let go of any quest to fit everything into neat and tidy definitions.

2.1 Defining Artists’ Publishing

It is difficult to talk about artists’ publishing as a whole, as the label is a blanket term for a vast and varied collection of activities. In *Some Forms of Availability*, Simon Cutts says:

Artists Books seems to me a catch-all arena, where we cannot even decide where to put the apostrophe to decide whether it’s possessive, genitive, or even plural. We would never talk about the whole of painting as if it were one thing. It is in this undifferentiated field that the first and recurring problem occurs: to distinguish between craft and the vehicle of the book, and craft always asserts itself when the idea is unclear. The most interesting books subvert the whole notion of illustration, of the separable parts of text and image... These new books attempt to synthesize text, image, material, method of production and context into a unified single work. When this succeeds, the book functions as a primary form. (2007)

Cutts characterizes an artist’s book as one in which each component of the publication is a deliberate act — a curated aspect of a singular work — rather than superfluous craft or simply a vehicle for text or image. He values the “Critical Publication,” which creates a “critical climate” and a “discursive forum,” rather than simply being “concerned with itself as an individualized item of production.” In addition, he includes “printed marginalia and ephemera” in the category of artists’ publishing. This description is only one subjective perspective, but it offers a general

guideline for understanding and attempting to distinguish artists' books from other types of publishing.

2.2 A Brief History of Artists' Publishing

In addition to serving as the Executive Director of Printed Matter, AA Bronson played an integral role in the history of artists' publishing. In 1969, he co-founded the artist collective General Idea in Toronto with his partners (in artwork and life) Felix Partz and Jorge Zontal (Diederichsen 2002). The group focused on conceptual and performance-based works, but also launched *FILE Magazine* — which took its name and logo from the most popular postwar magazine, *LIFE* — in 1972. In an interview in *Artforum* magazine, Bronson described Toronto as “a small, boring, conservative town” with a “very small art scene” but a “growing theatre scene, a small press publishing scene, a new music scene and Marshall McLuhan”: “We had to have our own magazine because no other magazine was ever going to write about us” (Diederichsen 2002). Like the underground newspapers of the time, *FILE* became possible because of the invention of the web offset press, which made printing affordable:

[*FILE*] was a newspaper with a glossy cover wrapped around it. It was designed to look like a magazine, but it was really a newspaper. [Laughs] Warhol was one of our first subscribers, and I used to personally deliver his subscription. At the time *Interview* was still a newspaper, and during my first visit to him and Glen O'Brien (the first editor), Andy said, “Ah-ha! We can do this too!” And the very next issue of *Interview* had a color cover! ... The early issues were mainly things people sent us — party photos, gossip stuff — which we put together with found images and our own projects. By '75 *FILE* was more of a General Idea project. And by the '80s it became more about other artists' projects. By then we were doing lots of exhibitions and didn't have a lot of time for the magazine, so by the end of the '80s we decided to close it down. But it was our longest-

lasting project: General Idea worked and lived together for 25 years and published *FILE* for 17 of them. (Diederichsen 2002)

Also in 1972, the same year that they began publishing *FILE*, General Idea founded Art Metropole as “General Idea’s personal ‘gallery shop’” (Diederichsen 2002). *FILE* had received a number of artists’ books in the mail from authors seeking reviews and these accumulated into a large archive “of very significant material, which was for the most part being overlooked” (Bronson 2008). In order to properly care for and make use of this developing archive, Art Metropole was established as one of the first organizations dedicated to artists’ books; by the nineties, the collection grew so big that it was too expensive to insure, and it was donated to the National Gallery of Canada (Bronson 2008). Today, Art Metropole describes itself as a:

...not-for-profit organization with a focus on the production, dissemination and contextualization of artist-initiated publication in any media, especially those formats and practices predisposed to sharing and circulation. (Art Metropole website 2015)

According to Bronson, in 1976 a group of American artists (including Sol LeWitt and Lucy Lippard) decided to found an organization dedicated to artists’ books, which would be modelled after Art Metropole and would feature an archive, a distribution system, and a publishing program. However, this original group split up and founded two separate organizations: Franklin Furnace (which went on to focus more on performance art) and Printed Matter.

During the lecture he delivered as part of the *Learning to Read Art: A History of Printed Matter* exhibition at Artspeak (which is available as a podcast on *Fillip’s* website), Bronson declares that: “Vancouver has always been such a strong place for publications and especially for artists’ books” (2008). Bronson says that artists’ books have technically been around since the 1900s — with iterations from the Russian constructivists, the dadaists and the surrealists, for example — but that Intermedia, an artist-run centre founded in Vancouver in the late 1960s, was responsible for introducing the “particular flavour of artists’ self-publishing as we know it today.” Using a

mimeograph machine housed in their backroom, Intermedia produced “amazing...publications that are very, very hard to find” (Bronson 2008). Bronson also credits Intermedia with establishing “the idea of artist-initiated and artist-determined culture in general,” which led to the development of a network of artist-run centres across Canada, which Bronson says is, for the most part, a uniquely Canadian system (2008).

However, Bronson says that the true centers of artists’ publishing in the 1960s and 70s emerged in places like South America, Eastern Europe, and Japan (as opposed to such mainstream publishing hubs as London, Paris, or New York) as forms of resistance, as in these places “...publishing anything on your own and not through some sort of approved system was a radical and politically dangerous idea” (Bronson 2008); though on the surface many of these artists’ books appeared playful and harmless, simply creating them was a political act.

Bronson says that three of the first organizations dedicated to artists’ books in Europe were Other Books and So, Ecarte, and Zona. Other Books and So, a bookstore run by Ulysses Carrion in Amsterdam, sold political literature and artists’ books — many of which were produced by South American refugees — and mounted regular publication exhibitions. Ecarte was a bookstore and mimeograph publisher in Geneva run by a group of five or six artists, including John Armelder; the shop, however, was the kind of place in which “nothing ever had a price on it and nobody knew where the key to the cashbox was and everybody was serving tea all the time,” says Bronson. Florence-based Zona, which artist Maurizio Nannucci was inspired to start with friends after he began collecting books (including the original futurist books produced in Florence), published and sold books but also held many exhibitions of its collections (some of which included work collected from Other Books and So and Ecarte).

2.3 Artists' Publishing in Vancouver Today

Artists' publishing in Vancouver today is grounded in its network of artist-run centres (non-profit organizations run by artists that often operate as galleries, artist studios and/or providers of other resources, such as equipment or performance space) that have mandates in which publication is central, such as Project Space, Publication Studio and Artspeak; independent artist collectives such as Print Ready, KIOSK, DDOOGG, and Zine Club; micro-press operations that offer publishing services such as Brick Press and Moniker Press; artists' bookshops that also serve as community spaces such as READ Books (located inside Charles H. Scott Gallery at Emily Carr University) and Or Bookstore (located inside the artist-run centre Or Gallery, which also produces artists' books); and post-secondary educational curriculum at Emily Carr University of Art + Design (ECU), the University of British Columbia, and Simon Fraser University. Since 2012, Project Space's international event the Vancouver Art/Book Fair has also acted as a critical piece of cultural infrastructure for this community of practice in the city and across the country.

Artist-run centres have provided a foundation for archiving, examining, and producing artists' publications, resulting in a more thoroughly documented history and discourse around publication in the visual art community. In addition, flexibility within granting programs in the visual arts — as compared to in the literary arts (in which the aim is to subsidize small press publishers' activities so they can participate in trade publishing) — has allowed the visual arts to foster much more innovative models for publication, including those that hybridize publishing programs with bookstores, exhibitions, and/or other programming. This context has provided a well-developed network and framework for publication in the artists' publishing community in Vancouver.

Since the Project Space storefront's founding in 2011, the organization³ has emerged as a key supporter of a community of artists, writers, and graphic designers working in the medium of publication. From 2011 to 2013, the project space enacted the organization's mandate through the circulation of books in its bookshop, the presentation of artists' publishing-related exhibitions in its gallery space, the production of artists' publications through Project Space Press, and the development of the Vancouver Art/Book Fair in 2012. Since shifting its operations in 2013, the organization's efforts revolve around VA/BF; an annual title through Project Space Press; its presentation of Monthly Open Studio events featuring different publishers in the visual arts, literary arts, and graphic design (from January 2015 to present); and other partnerships and initiatives (such as the production of performances and limited edition prints, including *Horror Man* by Aaron Read in 2015 and participation in the LA Art Book Fair in 2013 and 2015, where Project Space Press distributed zine series co-published with local artists/publishers).

Kathy Slade, a professional artist, professor at ECU, and the founder of READ Books and Emily Carr University Press, also founded Publication Studio Vancouver with her partner Keith Higgins. Stadler founded the original Publication Studio in Portland Oregon, but "sibling studios" that use the same equipment and approach later branched across North America and Europe, as described on their website:

We print and bind books on demand, creating original work with artists and writers we admire. We use any means possible to help writers and artists reach a public: physical books; a digital commons (where anyone can read and annotate our books for free); eBooks; and unique social events with our writers and artists in many cities. We attend to the social life of the book. Publication Studio is a laboratory for publication in its fullest

³ The term "artist-run centre" does not always refer to a physical space, and may refer to an organization type; therefore, today the organization still considers itself an artist-run centre.

sense — not just the production of books, but the production of a public. (Publication Studio website 2016).

Since 2013, Publication Studio has operated out of Project Space’s former storefront at 222 E Georgia Street, where it has increased its visibility and impact on the community through its ability to host regular shop hours and present publication launches and exhibitions. It also offers a variety of publishing services, further extending its capacity to support accessibility and a culture of publication.

Artspeak, a non-profit artist-run centre founded in 1986, has also made valued contributions to publication in Vancouver, and maintains a mandate to present “contemporary practices, innovative publications, bookworks, editions, talks and events that encourage a dialogue between visual art and writing”; in addition, the organization’s early association with the Kootenay School of Writing has positioned it as a unique platform for an “interdisciplinary community of writers, poets, critics and visual artists” (Artspeak website 2012). From 2008 to 2010 in particular, Artspeak undertook a two-year initiative devoted to publications and artists’ books, which featured on- and offsite programming, including the *Learning to Read Art: A History of Printed Matter* exhibition curated by AA Bronson, Printed Matter’s former Executive Director. Today, Printed Matter’s publishing program, massive bookshop, exhibitions, programming, and the annual NY Art Book Fair have established the organization as an international leader in artists’ publishing. The New York–based organization’s mission is “to foster the appreciation, dissemination, and understanding of artists’ publications,” which it defines “as books or other edited publications conceived by artists as art works, or, more succinctly, as ‘artwork for the page’” (Printed Matter website 2012).

Independent artist collectives are also critical to the cultural ecology around artists’ book production in Vancouver. Such collectives are often steered by an individual or core group of

artists, but host various events and pop-up exhibitions that encourage additional artists to contribute or present work. There is much overlap and collaboration between the communities of artists involved in these various projects, and these people are often post secondary students, recent graduates, or members of the music (for example, *Dunk* and *Late Cuts*), artist-run centre (for example, *Bartleby Review*) and/or literary communities (for example, *LIT LIT LIT LIT*). Current collectives who are serving as active hubs for zine production in Vancouver include KIOSK, a project by Juli Majer, Hugo Noriega and Cristian Hernandez that is “informed by a DIY ethos and non-conventional approach to print media” and “aims to recognize and strengthen relationships across fields of cultural production through print. KIOSK exists to support people as they explore, interact with and integrate print media into their practice” (Vancouver Art/Book Fair website 2015); Print Ready, a non-profit project that hosts regular book and zine launches and submissions-based exhibitions, co-founded by Nathan Jones and Michael Lachman in 2014 “in order to promote the work of artists experimenting with self-publishing zines and books” (Print Ready website 2015); and Zine Club, “a round robin of international zine trading and distribution that has been operating since 2013” that also curates exhibitions and produces publications (often in collaboration with other groups, such as Print Ready, Project Space, or Moniker Press) and that features publication work by “designers and media artists who create original works to be viewed both in print and on the web” (Vancouver Art/Book Fair website 2015).

Micro-press operations such as Brick Press, operated by artist Ryan Smith (who also operates publishing projects situated in the music community, such as Green Burrito Records), and Moniker Press, operated by artist and graphic designer Erica Wilk, also support cross-pollination and new production among Vancouver’s artists and artist-run centres. Working with castoff Risograph and offset printing machines and other salvaged publishing equipment, these artists publish their own works and also offer printing and production services, mainly to artists and

artist-run centres. In many cases, these operations serve to connect communities of practice that may not interface otherwise; for example, 221A's publication of artist Dan Starling's *The Part of No Part*, which was printed by Brick Press, represents an intermingling of the artist-run centre community with well-recognized emerging artists and more underground operations like Smith's, which produce results that are sometimes closer to zine culture than the more slick production values often preferred by more professionalized artist-run centres.

Bookshops dedicated to artists' books are also crucial, as they offer spaces in which the public can encounter and interact with artists' books on a regular basis. Both READ Books and Or Bookstore (formerly operated by the art journal *Fillip*, as Motto Vancouver) are able to operate regardless of shop revenues by attaching themselves to a gallery/institution—the former, Charles H. Scott Gallery at Emily Carr University and the latter, Or Gallery. They also serve as community spaces where publication launches and workshops contribute to the “social life of the book” and the development of an audience for publication.

The inclusion of education curriculum around artists' books at Vancouver's post-secondary institutions also plays a critical role in sustaining interest in artists' publishing and new production and activities, as each year new students and graduates intern or work with various artist-run centres and publishers, join and start artists' collectives dedicated to artists' books, publish new work, and participate in the Vancouver Art/Book Fair (either through their institutions, collectives, or independently).

Since 2012, Project Space's annual event the Vancouver Art/Book Fair has also brought increased visibility and interconnectedness to the various streams of artists' publishing taking place in Vancouver, while simultaneously connecting the city's practitioners to a global community of practice. Featuring publishers from Vancouver and around the world, the event

includes exhibitors that showcase work by over one-hundred publishers, and also presents numerous artists' projects, performances, talks and ancillary events (including Artists' Books Week, established in 2013).

2.4 Defining Literary Publishing

Literary publishing is the most easily defined stream of publishing activity and one that virtually all people — whether or not they are readers or writers — know exists. Literature is built into our education systems and entertainment culture, and is a key tool for developing literacy. However, for the sake of this report, “literary publishing” refers to literary self-publishing and small press book and magazine publishing produced within the literary community and sometimes outside of the trade industry. It is interesting to note the application of such a generic name to this faction of publishing activity, which hints toward the lack of discourse surrounding it as well as the shortcomings of the available documentation of it (as there are no organizations in the literary arts dedicated to self-published literary publications or chapbooks, comparable to the visual arts' Art Metropole or Printed Matter). Like artists' publishing, this community is relatively vast and varied, and these publishers and their works are often invisible to mainstream audiences. In addition, this work is more likely to be experimental and to blur the lines between literary publishing, artists' publishing, or zine-making. For example, many poetry chapbooks could also be viewed as artists' books in that they privilege form on par with content (for example, *Smash Swizzle Fizz* by Natalie Simpson, which is printed on a napkin, or *Dworkin Matchbox No.8* by Craig Dworkin, which takes the form of a matchbox). However, a poetry chapbook could also take the form of a zine, using a very DIY aesthetic, or could have production values and choices similar to a paperback novella.

2.5 A Brief History of Literary Publishing in Vancouver

Like with artists' publishing, resistance was a key influence in the development of small press publishers of literary books, magazines, chapbooks, and ephemera. In the era of the War Measures Act, the Vietnam War and the Gastown Police Riots, "... feminists, Marxists, anarchists, antiestablishmentarians, poets, writers and artists" sought places to publish their writing but were often rejected by the prevailing media outlets (Kozlowski 2011). Self-publishing was the response to a need, which writers and publishers addressed by starting book, magazine, and zine-like publishing ventures, learning by doing or from those with experience. In Vancouver, various financial and societal infrastructure also appeared during this time, such as government assistance for small publishers (previously, publishing in Canada was done by a few Canadian and foreign-owned publishers based in Ontario) and financial assistance that helped writers and artists to survive while honing their craft. This, along with the influence of many bookstores and two universities, set the scene for an "efflorescence of publishing activity: feminist book and periodical publishers such as Press Gang, *Makara* and *Room of One's Own*; counterculture presses such as Pulp Press and Vancouver Community News Press/NewStar Books; avant-garde literary book publishers such as Talonbooks, and periodicals such as *blewointment*, *Periodics* and *TISH*" (2011). This underground literary movement gathered in bookstores, the now nonexistent Alcazar Hotel, and literary salons, and published many of today's big names in Canadian literature, such as George Bowering, Fred Wah, Margaret Atwood, Al Purdy, bill bissett, Michael Ondaatje, and bpNichol. Some of the publishers that emerged during this time are still in operation today, including Arsenal Pulp Press, *The Georgia Straight*, *Room*, *PRISM International*, and The 3-Day Novel Contest.

2.6 Literary Publishing in Vancouver Today

Vancouver's literary publishing community is made up of a mix of small press publishers that attempt to operate within mainstream publishing (though this is a fairly impossible task), and

those that intentionally operate outside of the market economy. The small press community features an array of book publishers and literary magazines that are subsidized by national, provincial and municipal governments, private funders and other stakeholders, in order to operate within the trade publishing industry (such as Arsenal Pulp Press, Anvil Press, Talonbooks, *Poetry Is Dead*, *Geist*, *SubTerrain*, *Room*, *EVENT*, *PRISM International*, *The Capilano Review*, and *Ricepaper*). The work of these publishers, for the most part, differs from artists' publishing in that it consistently privileges the text as the "content," over the visuals, design, and format. However, *Poetry Is Dead* is a particular exception, as it can be argued that the visual art, design, and format of the publication are curated aspects of the magazine's "content," blurring the lines between literary and artists' publishing. In its intention to break the mould of the traditional poetry journal, the magazine often has more in common with more ad hoc or DIY literary initiatives such as *White Rabbit Quarterly* (which featured work by emerging writers printed on newsprint)⁴ or chapbook imprints like Hur Publishing (which created limited-edition, screenprinted chapbooks) or Cold Bullets Press (produced by Cail Judy of Wolf Mountain Writing Collective, which produces various poetry-oriented events and projects).

Poetry Is Dead straddles these two disparate communities, which are fairly isolated from each other within the literary scene and are also composed of diverse, isolated subgroups. While the aforementioned literary journals, magazines, and presses operate within trade publishing and act more as a stepping stone toward a career in the publishing industry, the latter act more as outlets for creative expression, often producing work that is characteristically raw, provocative or unexpected. Many of the publications within each of these groups enact publication through the dissemination of texts, interaction online (by distributing their content online and via such tools

⁴ In November 2011 *WRQ* hosted the launch of a mini issue numbered 3.5 at Project Space, which was to serve as a fundraiser for producing a fourth issue. However, due to continued financial complications, the fourth issue was never produced. The publisher, Michael Cook, has gone on to produce other artists' books.

as social media), and gatherings in physical space (which include readings, workshops, launches, and other events).

2.7 Defining Zines

Zines are generally booklets that are produced inexpensively and with low-fi production values, and are sometimes labelled as amateur or DIY publishing. They are often undertaken with the goal of self-expression or advocacy; however, they can also be part of a professional practice by artists, writers, or graphic designers. Stephen Perkins, in his *Works-in-Progress Pamphlet*, offers a word of warning to anyone undertaking a critical examination of zines: That they not try to establish “hard and fast rules pertaining to this quixotic activity...However close one gets to pinning a general theory or fixed structure on this very fluid activity, an exception, or a number of exceptions will reveal themselves” (1992). He describes zines as “artists’ self-publishing,” which indicates that the original zinesters — before the word “zinester” was coined — were artists (Perkins 1992). His definition asserts the zine as a dynamic and generative force, which cannot be defined as a fixed thing:

All zines are magazines, but not all magazines are zines. The dropping of the “maga” to arrive at “zine” denotes a particular set of attitudes, economics and technological practices that are intertwined in this type of self-publishing. Non-commercial, self-published in small editions and very often photocopied, zines arise out of particular subcultural milieus united by their common needs and interests. Their circulation, predominantly within these particular environments, places them deep under the web of cultural activity. (Perkins 1992)

While Perkins’ description of zines may be accurate in most cases, it is important to note that limited vocabulary surrounding these types of publishing activities means that the word is often put into usage as a catch-all term for various forms of independent or self-produced publications created cheaply and displaying low-fi production values. However, what is considered “cheap” or

“low-fi” depends on what type of publishing one is comparing their work to, causing a number of disagreements and discrepancies about what constitutes a “zine.” For example, if an artist is comparing a booklet of their self-published work to an art book published by Prestel Publishing, their definition of “low-fi” may look much more polished than the black-and-white, photocopied aesthetic often associated with a “zine.”

2.8 A Brief History of Zines

Perkins traces the zine, which he says erupted in the “’80s zine scene” (but continues to percolate today), back to eight streams of activity that occurred in the 1960s and 70s—

- (1) science fiction fanzines,
- (2) counterculture and the alternative press,
- (3) artists’ books,
- (4) artists’ magazines,
- (5) assembling magazines (which were created out of individual artworks that were mailed to the publisher and then collated into publications),
- (6) punk zines,
- (7) mail art and networking magazines (a movement epitomized by General Idea’s *FILE Magazine*), and
- (8) Fluxus publishing (which was produced by a global network of artists, composers, and designers who created and collaborated on interdisciplinary work that was often characterized by an anti-commercial, anti-art, DIY sensibility).

These various acts of publication were one way for a diverse group of “marginalized, special interest, subcultural, or other underground minority groups to give an affirmative voice to their interests and concerns,” which could be “generated by the established media's lack of coverage, biased coverage, total exclusion, or generated in direct opposition to the established media”:

One of [the self-published zines'] intrinsic roles is to act as a networking agent within the group. For many of these groups, where the members are dispersed geographically, culturally and politically, they provide links in the chain of communication, channels for exchanging information, notification of projects, and documentation pertinent to each groups' needs and interests. The "open" nature of many of these magazines also provides a space in which discussion, debate and correspondence — vital elements in furthering any groups aims and philosophies — can take place. Finally, in perhaps their most important networking role, they are one of the active agents through which the groups' identity takes shape and is given shape. (Perkins 1992)

In Canada, *Broken Pencil*, the Magazine of Zines and the Independent Arts (launched in 1995), can be seen as a major contributor to the development of a public around the practice and ethos of zine-making through their quarterly publication (which features zine reviews) and annual Canzine festivals in Toronto, Vancouver and Winnipeg.

2.9 Zines in Vancouver Today

While zines are also being created in the artists' and literary publishing communities, the groups traditionally associated with the word "zine" often identify as alternative and radical, or as comic/graphica artists (although, graphica in particular has begun to creep into literary publishing territory with the increasing inclusion of the graphic novel as a literary form). In Vancouver, this type of zine-maker is able to connect and trade or sell their publications at The Word Under The Street (located in the basement of the Vancouver Public Library, where they are literally "underground") at Word Vancouver, as well as at Canzine West, Festival of Zine Culture and Independent Arts⁵, hosted by the Toronto-based *Broken Pencil* magazine. While the former

⁵ It is interesting to note that the subtitle at the event has undergone continual revision, which supports the notion that official language surrounding zine culture is non-existent or underdeveloped. In 2011, the event was described as a "Zine Fair and Festival of Independent Culture," and before that the word "Alternative" stood in for the word "Independent." The switch from using the term "Zine Fair" to "Festival" may also be indicative of the organization's desire to convey the size of the event or to appeal to funders/suit particular funding streams.

presents these publishers separately from literary magazines (and includes few to no artist publishers), the latter presents zine publishers' work alongside a more underground or DIY stream of independent artists' (particularly illustrators) and writers' producing books, magazines, and zines, as well as small press publishers producing literary books and magazines. Other small businesses in Vancouver in which zine culture thrives are Lucky's Comics, The Regional Assembly of Text (which has associations with Perro Verlag press, which produces artists' zines), Blim, and Collage Collage; it is interesting to note that all of these businesses occupy a particular subniche that falls between DIY, crafting, and visual art.

3. Enacting Publication

As Stadler describes, publication involves the repetition of particular deliberate acts: the consistent production and circulation of texts, gatherings in physical space, and interaction online. As such, the artist-run centre model popularized in the 1960s and 70s provides an ideal framework for achieving publication. Observation of the activities these centres undertake — such as publishing books, developing bookstores or collections of books, hosting exhibitions of publications, and acting as a space for publishers and readers to connect — is likely what led to Stadler’s definition of publication. He, however, has added interaction in the digital realm, acknowledging the importance of this sphere in providing networked infrastructure that is capable of exponential growth.

3.1 Physical Space as an Axis for Publication

Physical space can serve as an axis for publication, as it provides a place in which an organization’s activities can be envisioned, executed, and delivered, as well as a public space in which this public can literally gather, connect, and engage in dialogue. In order to satisfy the need and opportunity present in Vancouver today, an organization could model itself after the London-based *workfortheyetodo*, which co-founder Simon Cutts describes as:

...a bookshop...a reference place for the activity surrounding the book as a medium...Currently this seems to emanate from the visual arts, but it is closely related to other fields of art, music and literature...Integral to this expanding practice, *workfortheyetodo* also arranges displays and exhibitions together with readings, to examine and present other collections of material and antecedents, to publicize new books in the field, and to itemize new additions and donations for reference.

Workfortheyetodo was begun by Coracle in 1992 and sustains itself on a near shoestring budget for economy of purpose. (2007)

In conjunction with the works published by Coracle, workfortheeyetodo provides an idyllic environment for cultivating the creation of a public, using multidimensional programming and an open approach to the book that utilizes the book as a space of inquiry, unbounded by the content or conventions of any particular artistic discipline. Furthermore, workfortheeyetodo clearly operates to develop a public, which is distinct from a market:

It did begin [at the idea of the bookshop as editorial space, platform, laboratory and workshop,] the idea of the bookshop as the way of showing books away from the confines of the museum, in a more casual way, where you could purchase if you wanted to or just browse if you didn't or couldn't...where there was no pretense to represent any scene other than itself, and the range of books way tiny, didactic and very eclectic. (Cutts 2007)

By cultivating an environment in which discovery is privileged over sales, and in which there is no pretense to subscribe to a particular subculture of publishers, workfortheeyetodo functions as an authentic “platform” and “laboratory” that encourages increased production, innovation, intellectual relevance, and meaning (Cutts 2007).

Due to the overhead involved in operating a brick-and-mortar space, there are also similar operations that run on a “pop-up” basis, opening in different locations for short amounts of time (such as Theophile’s Papers, based in Brussels, Belgium), from within another organizations’ spaces (such as Motto Vancouver, which formerly operated within Or Gallery) or that exist entirely online (such as Self-Publish Be Happy, based in London, England).

While the internet is not a physical space, it occupies an increasingly massive public space that has been integral to the development, maintenance, and growth of the networks that form around publication. Websites belonging to publishers, bookshops, artists, authors, and organizations; sites like Google and Yelp; blogs, online magazines, and news outlets; and social media (Twitter,

Facebook, Tumblr, Pinterest, Instagram, etc.) have all provided an unprecedented public space for those with niche interests to form a relatively large network. As such, all of the models that utilize physical space benefit from interaction with their networks online (via social media in particular), as well as from the addition of a companion online store (when resources — human and financial — allow). While the local population interested in publication may only be a small segment, this number drastically jumps when an organization is able to access an international network of readers, buyers, and collectors, via these various online channels. Therefore, interaction and presence online is not only important for remaining a relevant and meaningful part of an international dialogue, it also serves as an invaluable marketing tool, may increase sales, and contributes to the sustainability of the endeavour.

3.2 Publication Opportunities in Vancouver in 2011

While there was a lot of activity around publication occurring in Vancouver in 2011, these were largely segregated into separate, isolated silos (and not simply artists' publishing, literary publishing and zine publishing, but also the individual subgroups within and between these categories). At the time, *Broken Pencil* magazine's annual Canzine West festival was the only place for these various communities to converge, despite the fact that many of them had overlapping interests, values, aesthetics, or conventions.⁶ There was also no permanent space or ongoing activity to act as infrastructure for this broader network. Furthermore, the niche of artists' publishing that was seeing a renaissance is not particularly compatible with the *Broken Pencil* brand, which is built on the more traditional zine ethos that is characterized by DIY crafting and an attitude that is more blatantly radical or alternative. In fact, the Spring 2012 issue of *Broken Pencil* featured a cover story "Zines vs. Art: Is the Art World Taking Over?" that

⁶ It is worth noting that I organized Canzine West from 2010 to 2012, and that I intentionally invited members from each of these groups. While this, for the most part, reflects the *Broken Pencil* brand and my personal proclivities, it also can be attributed to the fact that there would not be a big enough public in Vancouver to support the festival if this approach had not been taken.

suggested zines by professional graphic designers, illustrators, and artists might be “edging out” the type of zines more traditionally associated with Canzine and the host magazine, suggesting that a need existed for infrastructure that is tailored to showcasing this burgeoning niche.

While these different factions of publication are compatible for potential collaboration or cross-pollination, public space that invited multiple publics to converge without privileging one discipline over the other was seemingly non-existent. Artspeak is an example of an organization that encourages dialogue between visual art and writing, but the literary components are framed in a contemporary art context and often don’t reach many people who aren’t already engaged in the visual arts (it is worth noting that funding is likely a key aspect defining programming, as Artspeak receives Visual Arts funding from Canada Council). Another example is of the literary magazine that retains an archaic relationship with design and only features visual art as an act of aesthetic decoration. To further complicate the situation, the work of these institutions and organizations are often unintentionally inaccessible (due to lack of distribution and sales infrastructure), invisible or intimidating to those outside of the organization and its immediate audience, providing few opportunities for entry into these realms of conversation.

In this context, in 2011 there was a space in Vancouver’s cultural landscape for an organization dedicated to publication (as defined by Stadler), with a particular interest in displacing the boundaries between artists’ publishing, literary publishing and zine-making (and the subgroups within and around these categories). Furthermore, there was an expressed need for more infrastructures for the type of publication seeing a renaissance, as well as an opportunity to expand this vitality into the literary and zine publishing communities.

3.3 OCW Arts & Publishing Foundation

OCW Arts & Publishing Foundation — which has gone by the doing-business-as name Project

Space since the establishment of its storefront by the same name in 2011 — is a non-profit organization dedicated to publication as an artistic medium. With a focus on the Vancouver Art/Book Fair and Project Space Press, it supports the visibility, creation and circulation of art publishing. Through its development of VA/BF (est. 2012) — a necessary piece of cultural infrastructure in Vancouver and Canada — OCW fosters an active, networked and vibrant community around publication while also connecting local practitioners and audiences to a global community.

Situated at an intersection of disciplines — namely the visual arts, literary arts and/or critical design — publication presents a unique space of inquiry that is often complemented by interdisciplinary practice, collaboration, or co-production. The organization’s projects reflect this context, engaging emerging and established local, national, and international artists, designers, writers, curators, and publishers in critical, conceptual, and/or interdisciplinary practices that examine, challenge, and explore publication.

OCW seeks to enact publication, defined as the creation of a public, through such projects as the Vancouver Art/Book Fair, Project Space Press, Monthly Open Studio events, and projectspace.ca, as well as its former bookshop/gallery storefront (2011–13) and artists’ periodical *OCW Magazine* (2006–13). This public is cultivated through the construction of a public space that is both literal and figurative, manifesting through the production and circulation of publications; the presentation of exhibitions, lectures, readings, workshops, and gatherings; and interaction and conversation online.

3.4 History of OCW

OCW Arts & Publishing Foundation was registered as a non-profit in October 2010, after operating as a magazine publisher since January 2006. The magazine was co-founded by graphic

designer Ken Yong and me, as *one cool word* magazine: a volunteer-run art and literary quarterly that featured work by Metro Vancouverites and included a CD compilation of music and spoken word. The magazine compiled and presented the artistic work in a manner similar to a literary review, without any particular structure or departments (and without articles, interviews, or reviews), encouraging the reader to connect deeply with and experience their own interpretation of the work without the magazine's interference. In 2010 the magazine relaunched as *OCW Magazine* and increased its print run from 300 to 500 copies, launched a subscription program (reaching 300 in one year), adopted a more traditional magazine structure (front-of-the-book, feature well, back-of-the-book), and began to include work by national and international contributors. While these changes were partially to incorporate the knowledge accrued after four years of publishing, they were also an attempt to get into the Canada Council for the Arts' New Magazine funding stream.⁷ However, not only did this format not result in funding, it did not feel true to the intentions of the magazine, and so in May 2011 the magazine underwent another shift into a biannual interdisciplinary art project dedicated to the cultivation of new ideas, new voices, and new ways of experiencing art. The three issues that were produced since this shift — *OCW 5.3/#19: Counterparts*, *OCW 6.1/#20: Material Arrangement*, and *OCW #21: Feminisms*⁸ — each explored a theme from an array of perspectives and in a variety of disciplines, creating an object of art, a forum for discourse, and a vehicle for engagement with art, culture, and ideas.

The first issue as an interdisciplinary art project, *OCW 5.3/#19: Counterparts*, initiated the organization's interest in conceptually driven publication, which was later discovered to fit into the category of artists' publishing. The issue took production elements from the previous issues in the publishing year — such as stark white covers featuring banal elements of visual culture

⁷ Many of these changes were informed by an informal consultation with Hal Niedzviecki, publisher of *Broken Pencil* magazine, in 2009 when I visited Toronto to attend MagNet, the national magazine conference hosted by Magazines Canada, as the winner of Magazines BC's Volunteer of the Year Award. This meeting is also what led to me organizing *Canzine West* from 2010 to 2012.

⁸ The first two of these issues were finalists (with the second winning) in the Editorial category of *DesignEdge Canada's* Regional Design Awards.

printed in black ink, coloured-paper dustjackets, and art and writing separated into different departments — and pushed them to the extreme. The counterparts theme was chosen based on the choice to publish the visual and literary work in separate booklets, abandoning a one-format-fits-all approach and allowing more influence on the ways in which readers/viewers would experience each discipline (as written and visual work privilege different types of interaction — reading versus looking).

The booklet of visual art, intended to facilitate looking, is larger and features greyscale reproductions of artwork on multi-coloured paper stocks, drawing attention to the paper itself. In this way, the page does not function simply to deliver the content, but instead becomes part of what is being viewed (the artwork) and actively shapes the viewers' experience of looking. These colour pages were randomly pre-sorted by hand before printing, discarding the possibility of a mistake in favour of chance placement and the potential to discover a new interpretation of each artwork. This randomization allows each issue to facilitate a different experience of the artwork, which was chosen based on both artistic merit and the ability to withstand the intensity and vibrancy of this treatment. The booklet of literary work, intended to facilitate immersive reading and portability, is smaller and features simple typography and typesetting similar to a paperback, promoting engagement, portability, and ease of reading. This approach combined the strategy of a literary review — collecting submissions, curating a selection from this collection, then presenting these in the form of a publication — with that of artists' publishing, in which particular consideration is given to how the book as an object can be used to examine the concept that the project seeks to explore.

The following issue, *OCW 6.1/#20: Material Arrangement*, expanded upon the concept of a magazine as an interdisciplinary art project through a partnership with 221A Artist Run Centre that extended the project into the gallery and provided a more critical framework. The publication

was created as part of a project produced by 221A and curated by Jaz Halloran and I (curatorial residents of 221A and the Art Director and Publisher/Editor of *OCW Magazine*, respectively), as part of the Goethe Satellite @ Vancouver series (produced in partnership with Revised Projects). The publication served as a print component of the project, expanding upon the explorations that were exhibited in the gallery from November 18 to December 16, 2011.

The project was inspired by an interest in banal visual communication materials, our desire to work with some of our favourite graphic designers, and our curiosity around Critical Design. The initial curatorial premise was in response to Ken Garland's 1964 manifesto "First Things First" (which was rewritten and published by *Adbusters* in 2000), but when we discovered Michael Rock's essays "Designer as Author" and "Fuck Content," the aims of the project became clear: To explore graphic design treatment as "a kind of text itself, equal to, and as complex and referential as traditional forms of content" (Rock 2009).

The issue features five quarter-folded, four-page tabloid sheets that use the print medium to explore how treatment affects meaning in graphic design. The outer sheet features the curatorial essay for the project, a poem by Jordan Abel (arranged by Jaz Halloran), a brief essay by Christopher Williams of Studio Gris, as well as photos of the four pieces in the exhibition and their corresponding artist statements. Each of the inner sheets were conceived of and designed by one of the project's four participating artists: Andy Chung, Anette K Hansen, Christy Nyiri and Easton West. The artists were instructed to create a graphic arrangement inspired by, referencing, or expanding upon their gallery pieces, taking into consideration the print medium and how it can be used to bolster their artworks. They were also asked to select a writer to create a text-based response to their work (Rebecca LaMarre, Andy Pressman and Jackie Wong) and worked with these texts as an additional exploration of graphic design treatment.

The *Material Arrangement* issue exemplifies OCW's interest in enacting publication. It created a space in which all were welcome, providing an opportunity for visual artists (including critical designers) and literary artists to collaborate on projects that combined the conventions of each discipline. The publication was circulated to readers in Vancouver, London, Berlin, New York, and LA, and physical gatherings occurred around the gallery exhibition, an artists' talk, and a publication launch held in Project Space's bookshop/gallery (which featured local graphic designers engaging in dialogue around the project, drawing on their own work and experience). In addition, the project was supported by digital discourse via the Goethe Satellite @ Vancouver blog, as well as OCW's website and social media channels.

The final issue of *OCW Magazine*, *OCW #21: Feminisms*, invited Vancouver author and artist Amber Dawn to present an "in-person engagement" with a "publication component" that explored her personal feminism. The performance-as-publication intended to create an immediate and intimate dialogue around personal feminisms, while also toying with the ephemerality of publication. The print component took formal inspiration from and included a transcript of Dawn's script "I Fell in Love with Black," a piece about her relationship with her art docent mother and her childhood affinity for the Louise Nevelson's sculpture *Sky Cathedral*. The limited run of fifty copies was only circulated at the actual presentation, a script reading by Dawn and three others that took place at the 2013 Vancouver Art/Book Fair. Though the project was intended to be a multi-part series created by five Vancouver-based artists and writers who identify as female, further iterations have yet to take place due to resource constraints.

4. Project Space as a Case Study

While working with Brian McBay, Executive Director of 221A Artist Run Centre, on the *Material Arrangement* project, it became clear that his knowledge of publishing in the realm of contemporary art would be very beneficial to OCW Arts & Publishing Foundation, which had previously tried to find its place among arts and culture and literary magazines. In discussion around why he would be a suitable internship mentor, I mentioned a long-term goal of opening a hybrid bookshop, publisher, programming space, and studio. Coincidentally, at that time 221A was considering leasing 222 East Georgia Street and turning it into a cultural hub/social enterprise that would offer two storefronts to non-profit organizations at below-market value (Access Gallery and another to be decided through an application process), as well as affordable office and studio spaces to artists and other creatives (such as architects, industrial designers, graphic designers, or writers). After further in-depth discussions about OCW's vision for a potential space, McBay invited OCW to submit a proposal to occupy the second storefront.

4.1 OCW's Proposal to Occupy the Available Storefront at 222

While the mission and concept of the space evolved as the project was put into motion (as was the mission of the Foundation), our proposal to 221A Artist Run Centre on May 7, 2011 was as follows:

OCW Arts & Publishing Foundation connects and engages artists of all disciplines, publishers, and arts organizations in new and meaningful ways. By valuing work across the spectrum of art making — from visual art to literature to graphic design — we foster cultural awareness and appreciation that transcends boundaries between disciplines. We encourage artists to engage in multi-disciplined practice, collaboration, and ongoing learning, and advocate for publishing as both an artistic medium and a vehicle for creating discourse around artistic practice. Through such projects and activities as *OCW*

Magazine and community programming, we develop curiosity and cultural literacy; cultivate community among artists, arts publications, and arts organizations; and provide audience development for arts and publishing on a broader scale. *OCW Magazine* was founded in 2006, and the Foundation was officially registered as a non-profit in 2010 (we are also applying for charitable status).

OCW @ 222 would deeply enhance and expand our ability to fulfill our mission by providing a physical space in which the organizations' projects and activities can be planned, executed, and delivered to our audience. It would also allow us to further our advocacy for independent arts publishing, by providing a space in which our audience can connect with these publications (in particular, independent, small-run, limited-edition, locally produced, and self-published magazines, zines, and books). In addition, we can make our space available to these publishers to host their own programming.

Our curated selection of publications would include those that function as *objets d'art* and those that provoke new ways of understanding and/or experiencing the content. For example, such magazines as *Poetry is Dead*, *Fillip*, *Pyramid Power*, *White Rabbit Quarterly*, *Pie Paper*, *Factory*, *A Public Space*, *Foam*, *Graphic*, *Bad Day*, *Boat Magazine*, and *Bidoun*; zines by Perro Verlag, Smoke Signals Arts, OWT Creative, and independent artists/writers; and such books as *Cutting Edges*, *Behind the Zines*, and *Turning Pages* by Gestalten, as well as books by artful writers such as Miranda July's *Learning to Love You More* and *No One Belongs Here More than You* or Jonathan Safran Foer's *The Tree of Codes*. By displaying only one copy of each publication, featuring covers prominently, and allowing for space among different publications, the presentation will emphasize each publication as a precious object and will privilege the quality of a

visitor's experience with the object over the quantity of objects available for him or her to purchase. To foster accessibility and support sales, we would stock publications priced mainly between \$5 and \$80 (with the majority falling between \$10 and \$25). To facilitate an environment in which visitors can relax, engage with our selections, and connect socially over the publications, we will also offer coffee and tea for sale (this could also offer an additional draw for visiting the space and could provide ancillary revenue).

It is interesting to note how similar this proposal is to the artist-run centre models that were developed in the 1960s and 70s, as well as *workfortheeyetodo* (which opened in the 1990s), despite the fact that this proposal was created before any awareness of artists' publishing or the organizations dedicated to it in Vancouver, nationally, or globally (due to ignorance, research was mainly aimed at uncovering unconventional bookstore models). As OCW has always been more deeply rooted in the literary community, familiarity with the visual arts community — beyond relationships with individual artists in Vancouver — was very limited. This realization after the fact signified an authenticity in the need the organization had experienced and witnessed, and increased trust in the solution it had organically come to. In other words, although the OCW @ 222 proposal was not conceived as a conscious response to a market or due to interest in replicating an existing model, evidence of other organizations' successful use of this model indicated that not only did a market exist, but that the model we intended to try had already been tested.

4.2 Finalized Plans for Project Space

By mid-June it was confirmed that OCW's proposal was accepted and the organization would be leasing the storefront, so OCW's Art Director Jaz Halloran and I commenced to finalize the name and mission of the space, as well as what its core operations would be and how these would be accomplished. As there were less than three months before the space opened to the public, these

decisions had to be made quickly. After the most thorough deliberation possible, the name Project Space was selected. A “project space” is a space or setting in which contemporary art projects — such as exhibitions, installations, reading rooms or performances — occur and are presented to the public. It is a commonly used term in the visual art community, and one that is growing in popularity with artist-run centres and other collectives as an alternative to “gallery” or “exhibition space,” as it suggests that the projects are meant to be more than simply viewed. By choosing a literal name, OCW was not only asserting that the storefront is a project space (not simply a bookshop), but was also establishing a voice that is minimalist and privileges the work being created and presented in the space over a constructed identity. In other words, the projects, community, and dialogue that came to occupy the space would be what developed its identity; the space would act as “a public space, which beckons a public into being” (Stadler 2010). In addition, the name Project Space also indicates a project that critically examines “space,” which captures OCW’s interest in exploring the redefinition of print and physical spaces at a time when much of our interactions occurred online and publishing discourse was largely centred upon developing digital business models, harnessing new technologies, and finding print strategies that could compete with their digital counterparts. Once a name was chosen, this was fused with our original concept to create the space’s mission statement:

Project Space is a bookshop, publisher, programming space and studio by OCWArts & Publishing Foundation in collaboration with Project Space Studio. As the possibilities inherent to digital space become increasingly infinite, the roles of physical and print spaces are being redefined. Project Space examines, challenges and supports this redefinition process through a curated selection of publications, exhibitions, workshops, lectures, and readings.

This mission reflects a clear tie to the Foundation’s mission, while providing a particular framework for how this project will facilitate the accomplishment of the organization’s mandate.

In order to secure volunteer labour from Jaz Halloran and I — developing Project Space’s visual identity, defining the scope of its operations, and facilitating the artistic programming and day-to-day operations — OCW offered us office space in the back of Project Space for our studio and consultancy Project Space Studio (which offered services in marketing and publishing, such as art direction, design, writing, editing, and project management). This arrangement served to offer modest compensation for the numerous unpaid hours dedicated to the project.

4.3 Development of Project Space

The development of Project Space consisted of five main components—

- (1) converting the interior of the space into a bookshop, programming space, and studio;
- (2) developing a business plan for the space;
- (3) stocking the bookshop;
- (4) planning and booking programming to occur in the space; and
- (5) developing marketing and sales strategies.

4.4 Designing the Interiors of Project Space

Designing the interiors of Project Space was a challenge as none of our volunteer staff or board members had expertise in this area; furthermore, the size, shape, and unique features of the space — a 450-square-foot narrow space with high ceilings, an antique radiator, and a large, awkwardly situated pipe in the front of the room — created design challenges that OCW felt required expertise.

While researching shelving that would be more sculptural and would present the books as objects of art, rather than simply merchandise to be consumed, OCW encountered Evenings + Weekends (E+W), an art, design, and architecture collective made up of three Masters of Architecture students from UBC: Darcy Hanna, Raneen Nosh, and Emma Sims. E+W had exhibited an

installation at The Cheaper Show that was constructed of cut-up strips of shipping pallets. Some of these pallet pieces were also painted white and used as shelving behind the bar at the event. The producer of The Cheaper Show (who has also volunteered with OCW), Tim Furness, connected OCW with E+W after we inquired about the fate of these pallet pieces.

E+W were very inspired by the concept of Project Space and were enthusiastic about volunteering their time to get the interiors of the space ready in time for our opening in September. At our initial meeting we shared our vision of Project Space — including the minimalist visual voice that we sought and our goal of highlighting the work in the space first and foremost — as well as the unique needs of the space: (1) It would have to function as a bookshop, (2) The bookshop infrastructure would need to be non-intrusive or modular, to accommodate the use of the space for programming and (3) The back area of the space needed to function as a studio. After the initial meeting and a viewing of the space, E+W proposed a plan for the interior of the space that featured a white-walled, gallery-inspired setting that included shelving, three nested tables for the front window (which would overcome the design challenge presented by the pipe), two plinths (which would serve as modular retail feature areas or infrastructure for exhibitions, while also referencing the gallery setting), a window installation and a ceiling installation. Due to the short timeline and budget, OCW would be responsible for furnishing the studio, but E+W provided suggestions as to how this could be done. This activity commenced immediately, with E+W building the pieces for the bookshop and OCW sourcing used furniture off of Craigslist for the studio space.

4.5 Developing a Business Plan

Board members Sarah Husain (HR Specialist) and Lorraine Stefanucci (retired accountant and small business owner) were instrumental in the development of a business plan for Project Space. The business plan utilized the organization's key resources (volunteer labour and a brick-and-

mortar space) in order to facilitate repayment of development costs and payment of fixed expenses (rent and insurance), as well as variable expenses. Our major revenue streams included rental of the space as a venue for programming, revenue earned by Project Space–hosted programming, donations, memberships (with a structured program that aimed to be launched in 2012, but was not initiated until 2014—after the bookshop had closed), grants (though the only grant received by the organization during the period the storefront operated was for the 2013 Vancouver Art/Book Fair), and book sales. The business plan also relied upon a consignment system for the bookshop, which reduced risk and supported a healthy cash flow by requiring little to no money up front for merchandise.

4.6 Stocking the Bookshop

Project Space’s bookshop was a space to discover print objects of art by contemporary artists, designers, and writers, as well as publications that support artistic practice and discourse. Its selection included art, design, and literary publications, with a focus on those that are rare, independent, small run, limited edition, or locally produced. OCW’s long-term goal was for Project Space to house an extensive collection of artists’, literary and zine publishing created in Vancouver (acting as *the place* to find these works), as well as a selection of like-minded work created around the globe. This would provide a place for local publishers to share their work and connect with work by peers from around the world; for readers, it would provide a space in which they can connect with work produced locally, and to get a sense of the global publication context.

Stocking the bookshop presented a particular challenge, as our modest cash flow prohibited us from paying for books up front, and as we did not have a credit card or the administrative infrastructure to work with a variety of distributors. In addition, the shop specialized in small-run, limited-edition, and rare publications that had been created by small publishers or individual artists or writers; these publications were often expensive to produce and expensive to ship, so the

small quantities we ordered made sales in our shop not particularly profitable. However, most of these titles were produced for reasons outside of the market: they were contemporary art pieces, published by cultural non-profits or created as passion projects. Therefore, many of these publishers simply wanted to see the publications get into the hands of a reader or viewer, so they were willing to consign their books with us whether or not they were likely to make any profit. Furthermore, as the shop's audience was small but loyal, being featured in the shop acted as a marketing tool that could have — and often did — precede interest in future or backlist titles or subscriptions.

Research for the development of the bookshop collection was done mainly online, via blogs, social media and publishers' websites. Titles were handpicked and ordered informally, via email conversation. The majority of publishers contacted responded with interest, but about a quarter of those contacted were unable to participate due to the lack of profitability (however, most of these still praised our project and offered encouragement to the endeavour). The consignment contract OCW created specified a 50/50 split with national consignors and a 60/40 split with international consignors (to compensate for higher shipping costs) and put the responsibility of shipping costs on the consignor (however, they were encouraged to build this into the requested retail price). OCW paid out consignors on a yearly basis, via cheque or PayPal (for international consignors). This approach was generally well received, with the majority of consignors also donating a copy of each publication for Project Space's archive. Consignment was tracked in a spreadsheet on Google docs (backed by the hard copy contracts and hard copy receipts), but OCW also arranged a trade with *Fillip* magazine publisher Jeff Khonsary (who operates the design studio The Future with his studio partner Courtney Webber), in which I provided office assistance to *Fillip* and its

Motto Books shop in the Or Gallery in exchange for the Filbert database software that was used by Motto Books Vancouver.⁹

Out of necessity OCW did work with two distributors, Magazines Canada and Manda Group. The former, because this was the only way to access certain magazine titles (such as *Bad Day* and *Hunter and Cook*, which folded shortly after our storefront opened); however, we still preferred to work with publishers directly, which we did with such magazines as *Poetry is Dead*, *EVENT*, *PRISM*, *Ricepaper*, and *Geist* (not coincidentally those with which OCW had a personal relationship, likely due to proximity, as we publish in the same city). The latter, because this would allow us to be one of the only Vancouver-based bookshops that carried German-based publisher Gestalten's titles. The books that Gestalten produces are unique not only in the topics they cover, but also in the meticulously detailed — and often conceptual — production choices. In particular, their titles *Turning Pages: Editorial Design for Print Media* and *Behind the Zines: Self-Publishing Culture* were titles our audience needed access and exposure to. The choice to limit working with distributors was a barrier to accessing certain books OCW would have really liked to carry; as such, OCW did plan to work with more distributors in the future, once the business and administrative infrastructure could handle it.

4.7 Planning and Booking Programming

As OCW was preoccupied with the *Material Arrangement* project in the fall of 2011, Project Space's self-produced programming was minimal: a zine-making workshop by Anne Emberline, co-hosted with *Broken Pencil* and MABC (as part of Culture Days and in anticipation of Canzine West) and the launch of *OCW 6.1/#20: Material Arrangement*, which featured local graphic designers speaking about their reactions to the project as well as their own practice. However, as

⁹ However, human resource limitations — namely, relying on unpaid interns to operate the storefront and create the database — and technological glitches without a clear channel of communication with the software developer to resolve them, resulted in this database never being created.

Project Space was also intended as a public space in which like-minded organizations could present their projects and interact with their audiences, and as venue rentals accounted for much of the incoming revenue supporting the space's operations, an email call for programming proposals was sent to OCW's peer network on September 3, 2011. The response was immediate and enthusiastic, resulting in queries from such groups as the Vancouver is Awesome Book Club (which hosted their January event in Project Space), UBC's Creative Writing Students Association (which facilitated Project Space becoming the venue for Locution, a monthly MFA student reading), and the Dead Poets Reading Series (which hosted their bimonthly event at Project Space). In particular, our space appealed to the literary community, likely because of *OCW Magazine's* ties with this group, but also because the space was intended as an intimate programming space, which positioned it as an alternative to coffee shops, bars, or traditional bookshops, which can be too noisy, too crowded with shelving, too big, too dark, or too expensive to book. After the initial call for proposals, word-of-mouth was enough to garner steady bookings of the space.

On October 18, 2011, we distributed a call for project proposals, with the goal of securing five exhibitions or publishing projects to occur in the space in 2012. The response was also enthusiastic, resulting in a number of conversations regarding potential projects for 2012 and 2013.

4.8 Marketing and Sales Strategies

Project Space's marketing and sales strategies were largely based on the time and budget constraints that were unique to the circumstances. The strategies relied on word-of-mouth generated by the relationships *OCW Magazine* had with the community, as well as those Project Space built with people who came into the bookshop, who consigned publications in the shop, who hosted events in the space, who attended events in the space, and who interacted with Project

Space online. As OCW's audience is both niche and actively involved in Vancouver's arts and publishing communities, this approach was necessary and unfolded organically. These relationships were built upon sincere interest in these people and their work, knowledge of the publications carried in the shop, and the care that went into curating our publications and programming.

We continued to build our street presence, putting a sandwich board outside of the shop during our open hours, improving our interiors in iterative stages, and coming up with strategies to make the store more inviting from the outside (including a mural project in the window display space and continued strategizing as to how to optimize this space). Many of our strategies were contingent upon fundraising targets and were rolled out in stages; for example, we developed plans to make improvements to the lighting of the space, particularly in the window display and gallery areas, but were never financially capable of doing so.

In addition, Project Space used a number of online tools (such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, a monthly e-newsletter facilitated by Mail Chimp, and Yelp) as well as presence at events (like The Word on The Street, Canzine West, and Swarm), all of which resulted in higher sales numbers and additions to our mailing list and social media accounts. The diverse programming that occurred in the space — hosted by others and by Project Space — also acted as a key audience development, marketing, and sales tool.

Resources and financial capacity were major restrictions to OCW's capacity to employ much of its marketing and sales strategy. Namely, a website that included an online shop, which would have allowed access to an international audience of readers and collectors and provided a new, low-cost revenue stream (once this had been realized, online tools could have been used to drive traffic to the site as well as to the brick-and-mortar shop). In addition, there were plans to develop

a print marketing piece (designed to also function as a collectible piece of ephemera) to be distributed to targeted businesses, artist-run centres, and galleries in and around Main Street, Strathcona, Chinatown, and Gastown. Other plans that would have contributed to marketing and sales included the development of a membership program and an annual Vancouver Art/Book Fair, which was launched on October 6, 2012 (in tandem with the Institutions by Artists Conference) and featured French curator Charlotte Cheetham of *Manystuff* as a special guest. These strategies intended to connect Project Space with a local network (and contribute to its expansion), while also opening it up to a global network (particularly the book fair, which presents work by local, national and international publishers and special guests).

4.9 Project Space in Operation

Project Space opened on September 9, 2011, as part of Swarm, the Pacific Association of Artist Run Centre (PAARC)'s annual festival of artist-run culture. The launch was particularly advantageous due to Project Space's proximity to Access Gallery and 221A Artist Run Centre (both of which are members of PAARC), and because the evening marked the official opening of the 222 project as a whole. Access Gallery, a twenty-year-old artist-run centre that also officially opened their new location during Swarm, was connected to Project Space at the entrance to the space by an open doorway, facilitating ease of movement between the two spaces. The opening was very successful and attracted a large crowd made up of OCW's audience combined with the audiences of Access and 221A; despite the party atmosphere, books were sold and many conversations about the space were had. As a result of the opening, Project Space received enthusiastic, positive reviews in *The Ubyyssey* as well as *Canada Arts Connect* magazine.

In its first nine months of operation, Project Space met or exceeded its modest \$150/month projection for book sales (with higher sales in September and November due to The Word on the Street and Canzine West book fairs), and also booked more venue rentals than anticipated. By

December, events were already booked into February. Rental events ranged from literary readings and book launches to a workshop for comic artists and an artisan jewellery pop-up shop. While foot traffic and sales numbers remained more or less steady, its online presence continued to grow (despite its in-progress, not-yet-launched website), with steadily increasing numbers across social media and its mailing list, as well as increasing interaction with its posts.

4.10 Public Programs in 2012

OCW's initial goal was for Project Space to present five projects a year. Its programming year for 2012 was as follows:

- March 30: *Art Factum* exhibition, by *Poetry is Dead* publisher Daniel Zomparelli, which featured a curated selection of poetry chapbooks in order to examine and document this contemporary niche of publication.
- June 1, 2012: Co-publication of *Party Foreverer*, a book of illustrations by Jeffry Lee that includes the *Party Foreverer* album by Lee's band Hard Drugs (co-published with The Storyboard Label). The project explored the interrelation of documentation and memory and the role of the book in constructing histories, as well as how text and images — in book format — contribute to the experience of a musical album.
- July 21, 2012: *Summer School*, by New York-based artist Erin Jane Nelson, used social practice to explore personal economy through the erection of a free public art school that explored social concerns, followed by an exhibition of work and artifacts resulting from the school.
- September 7, 2012: *Money is Just Paperwork*, by Vancouver-based artist Randy Grskovic, explored the value of printed paper and print materials through analogue collage works that made reference to money (an exaggerated example of paper that has been assigned value).

- October 5, 2012: *The Wandering Art Metropole Publications and Ephemera Archive: Part 2* was co-produced with Art Metropole. Items from the archive were displayed on support structures created by Toronto-based artist Shane Krepakevich, and Vancouver-based artists Julia Feyrer and Leanne Johnson created responses to the archive.
- October 6 and 7, 2012: Vancouver Art/Book Fair, featuring local, national and international publishers and special guests, including French curator Charlotte Cheetham of *Manystuff*.

These projects were met with relative success, particularly for a brand new project space. The organization measured a project's success based on how well it enacted the non-profit's mission statement and how well it engaged our audience. While the biggest success was directly addressing OCW's mission, the biggest challenges and areas in need of improvement were: a) facilitating visitors' understanding of what Project Space was and was doing (such as, what parts of the space were "gallery space" and what portion was a retail book shop), b) having enough interpretation available (via interpretative texts, catalogues and/or didactic texts) and programming to convey what the project is about and to deepen visitors' engagement with the work (since the project space was also a bookshop, projects tended to require more explanation than they would in a typical gallery space), c) building an ongoing audience for Project Space's programming, rather than disparate audiences for individual projects, and d) developing firmer infrastructure and policies in terms of how we worked with artists and curators. Limited organizational capacity and our inability to secure any public or private funding drastically affected our ability to deliver successful projects.

4.11 Major Challenges of Operations

The major challenge in the 2011/12 fiscal year was continuing to implement the operations and development of Project Space with only two unpaid Directors handling all of the planning and execution of these developments amidst a number of other paid, volunteer, and education-related

commitments. In addition, minimal resources contributed to a delay in delivering fundraising strategies and limited ability to submit grant applications; this, combined with the rejection of all submitted grant applications, resulted in financial challenges for the organization.

In order to deal with these concerns, Project Space recruited an operations committee of artists, writers, publishers, editors, grant writers, designers, photographers, and videographers in March 2012. This committee was created to assist in shaping Project Space's future and identity through support envisioning and executing our 2012 projects, programming, fundraising, and day-to-day operations. However, after a couple of months it became clear that the committee required more leadership than Project Space's Directors were able to provide (as creating the committee was intended to transfer leadership for various projects to individuals other than the space's Directors). While the committee was not formally terminated, it was put on hold until a plan for how this committee could be run more effectively could be generated. In May 2012 we also brought on a few interns that took responsibility for running the bookshop during the majority of its open hours. This was intended to increase the Directors' abilities to focus on more administrative tasks and longer-term projects; however, increased stress on the Directors' schedules outside of Project Space (with Halloran having to almost entirely drop out of the project), resulted in capacity remaining extremely strained despite this assistance.

As a result, by mid-2012 Project Space was in the process of revising its strategy for success in the coming fiscal year, with such ideas as a) board development (at the time OCW's Board was very hands off), b) bringing on collaborating partners to help sustain the space's operations (for example, other zine or artists' books collectives), c) reducing the number of hours open to the public to one or two days, d) reducing the size of the bookshop and becoming more of a reference library, e) reducing the number of curatorial projects to approximately three per year, including

the Vancouver Art/Book Fair (which would receive much of the organization's focus), and/or f) researching the feasibility of becoming a North American distributor, much like Motto Books.

4.12 Decision to Close Project Space

Despite continued attempts at resolving the challenges faced by the Project Space, the amount of resources it required began to cripple the organization and completely exhaust those at its helm.

As the Vancouver Art/Book Fair project, founded in October 2012, continued to gain momentum and demand a substantial amount of the organization's capacity, the storefront operation began to suffer critically, draining not only the volunteers that operated it but also its finances. As VA/BF had proven its concept both artistically and as a business model — as it attracted a substantial audience, garnered an extremely positive response from the art publishing community and visitors, and received a City of Vancouver grant in early 2013 — it was decided to refocus the organization's energy on this project and to close the storefront.

At this point, OCW began using the name Project Space as its doing-business-as name, despite the closing of the bookshop/gallery. It moved its headquarters to a studio space in 236 E Pender Street, a building operated in a similar manner as 222, but by artist-run centre UNIT/PITT Projects (which operates a gallery in the building's storefront). Grant revenues from the VA/BF project, coupled with rent from tenants who share the studio, support the organization's ability to rent this space. In addition, Halloran continues to trade labour as Studio Manager in exchange for the ability to use it for his personal workspace for his freelance practice.

The 2013/14 fiscal year was spent resolving the backlog of activity relating to the storefront and its closing, as well as maintaining operation of VA/BF, and in 2014/15 — with the help of a Curatorial Committee comprised of former bookshop/gallery interns and new recruits and a new and active Board of Directors — the organization was able to initiate such goals as its

Membership program and Monthly Open Studio events (goals that were not feasible while operating the Project Space). By the close of the 2014/15 fiscal year, OCW had paid off almost the entire deficit caused by the storefront; in addition, the VA/BF project grew to attract nearly 5,000 attendees, had attracted funding from all levels of government as well as other funders (such as Access Copyright Foundation), expanded to three days plus an entire week of supplementary programming under the umbrella of VA/BF's Artists' Books Week, and had featured work by hundreds of artists from around the globe — with all presenters receiving CARFAC-rate fees for their presentations since 2013.

5. Conclusion

Project Space the storefront — and the organization that took a more defined shape as a result — was founded on the principles that Stadler outlines: that publishing transforms into publication and creates lasting meaning that endures over time when it is part of a network of interactions and conversations that occur in literal and figurative public space. However, this takes time. A “public” is not instantly created by deliberate acts, but is slowly fostered in response to consistent, continual deliberate acts. Therefore, while one can analyze Project Space’s bookshop/gallery as a case study, it is more fruitful to view it as one would a publication: Based on the context from which it was borne and the position it occupied in an extensive web of cultural activity.

Thanks to the internet, it is possible to get quite a large snapshot of this cultural web as it exists today. The shared set of interests, values, passions, and curiosities that the bookshop/gallery was founded on can be seen reflected in a vast network of publishers, online shops, brick-and-mortar shops, artist-run centres, post-secondary educational programs, exhibitions, and book/zine fairs around the globe. Despite immense separation geographically, these initiatives often have similarities in their structures and in the activities that they produce, and even their publications, websites, and brick-and-mortar spaces tend to use comparable aesthetics and language. Viewed collectively, a picture emerges of a rich, vast public that while limited in terms of physical interaction is still connected via the internet (namely blogs and social media), festivals, and fairs (depending on how far one can afford to travel), and a handful of specialized distribution channels (such as Motto Books, bookshops like READ Books, and services like Stack magazines). This network is not unlike any of the other self-publishing networks currently in existence or that have come before it, but it is characterized by one major distinction: The addition of the internet and digital technologies, which have influenced not only the content,

production, and distribution of these publications (and the ease at which the networks' various nodes flourish), but also who is creating them (particularly more illustrators, more graphic designers, and more photographers who work digitally). In this network, OCW is clustered near organizations like Printed Matter, Art Metropole, Artspeak, READ Books, Motto Books, and Publication Studio, asserting its own unique position by examining publication through an interdisciplinary framework that takes into account the context, conventions, and histories of artists' publishing, literary publishing, and zine-making, seeking not only to encourage the development of each of these publics, but also to provide a space in which these factions can cross-pollinate and connect to form a larger public with a much greater potential for innovation and meaningful dialogue. This ambitious goal may take years of consistent, deliberate acts to accomplish, and the result may look different than expected at the outset.

The main weakness that felled the Project Space storefront was its ability to maintain the volunteer energy and cash flow required during the first few years of operation. In simpler terms, despite a demonstrated demand for such a space — one that served as a platform for publication and the activities surrounding it — it did not have a strong or steady enough revenue-generating activity or set of activities to sustain what was required to operate it. At the same time, what emerged as a secondary activity, the Vancouver Art/Book Fair, became a project that had a sustainable business model, met an active and growing need and could, ultimately, serve as an anchor for all of the organization's programming and publishing activities. It also serves the same goals as the bookshop/gallery, though it does so in very different ways and with different demands on the organization's capacity: it serves as a platform for the dissemination and presentation of publications and related projects and programs (across the spectrum of disciplines that engage in publication as an artistic medium); it offers an opportunity to raise the visibility of publication as a medium and to circulate such work within a specialist and general public; it cross-pollinates, creates community and acts as a foundation for collaboration among disparate

Vancouver (as well as national and international) practitioners and audiences; and it connects local, national and international artists and publishers with each other and with Vancouver audiences. Therefore, it was necessary to adjust the overall organizational strategy and focus to meet an evolving set of circumstances. Despite the benefits of this change, there is a great distinction between a year-round bookshop/gallery and a three-day festival situated within a week of artists' publishing-related events; in order to maintain the energy and momentum created by VA/BF, it has been imperative for Project Space to showcase the work of local practitioners in real time at its Monthly Open Studio events — often presented in collaboration with local artists, collectives and publishers — to enact its mission year-round and keep its audience and peer organizations engaged and connected.

Project Space's bookshop/gallery as a case study has implications for traditional distribution channels, namely the bookstore. It draws attention to the fact that there is still no established distribution network for publishers operating outside of mass-market trade publishing. It also highlights the fact that most bookstores today need to be more than just a place where one can purchase books in order to stay in business. For readers who only want to buy a print book, Amazon, Chapters, Costco, Abe Books, and independent online shops increasingly provide access to a myriad of titles at slashed prices; in other words, one really has to go out of their way to purchase a print book from an independent brick-and-mortar store. This positions a bookstore as irrelevant, unless it is providing:

- (1) titles that cannot be found in traditional channels,
- (2) a selection of titles that has been curated for a particular audience or niches (therefore doing all of the labour of finding and sourcing the books the audience wants), and

(3) the service of book selling as one part of a larger program dedicated to the needs of a particular audience or niches (such as community space that attends to the “social life” of the book).

Without all three of these components, it is going to be challenging for a bookstore to survive; even if it does offer all of them, there is still extensive risk. However, as Costco never carried more than a small selection of titles aimed at the mass market, as Chapters Indigo becomes more and more of a lifestyle store (carrying less and less specialized titles) and closes major locations (like the Robson Street location in Vancouver, which closed in 2015), and as Amazon provides no human-like connection beyond a set of suggestions from a robot (“Customers Who Bought This Item Also Bought”), independent brick-and-mortar bookstores may still have a place in the cultural landscape. However, more often than not such bookshops need to be paired with or integrated into another business or institution that can subsidize its overhead — such as Or Bookstore in the front of Or Gallery or READ Books at the entrance of Charles H. Scott Gallery in Emily Carr University. In other words, institutions that publish or have a vested interest in publication need to make room for such spaces (which cultivate publication) to exist. Other businesses — such as coffee shops or clothing boutiques, for example — would also serve as perfectly good hosts to small bookshops, but have less motivation to do so, as this may offer them little more than brand cachet and some residual traffic, and therefore may require resources that aren’t commensurate with the benefits.

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