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The future of research monographs: an international set of perspectives

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Abstract: This Forum makes four points. First, it expands our knowledge on the writing and publishing of research monographs in different countries and so it moves beyond accounts which generalize from the UK experience. Second, the Forum considers international differences in the ways in which the assessment of academic performances affects the writing and publishing of geography research monographs. Third, it considers the ways in which structural changes in the global publishing industry affect different national contexts unevenly. Finally, the Forum's different contributions reflect on how publishing books matters (or) not to geography as a discipline.

Key words: academic assessment system, human geography, ISI Thomson journals, national differences, publishing industry, research monographs.

Introduction

Over recent years, several commentators have noted an apparent decline in the number of monographs being written by UK human and physical geographers. The 2001 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) Geography Panel, in its short report, commented on 'the continuing decline, outside of historical geography, in the publication of research monographs' (RAE Geography Panel, 2001: 2).

Thrift (2002: 295), in his 'the future of geography' review, noted a number of problems facing the discipline, one of which was 'a general decline in the production of learned books and monographs in favour of journal articles'. Most recently, David Harvey (2006) has reignited this issue. In producing a list of monographs he discovered only two originating from Britain. He expressed concern at the lack of substantive monographs.

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Acknowledging that he is 'not a systematic reader of the geographical literature' and that his 'sample is undoubtedly biased' (p. 409), Harvey, like Thrift, based his piece on no more than an impression of the number of monographs that UK geographers were writing and publishing. Ironically, given their differences over other disciplinary matters, Harvey and Thrift united around claims that there had been a decline in the production of research monographs and that this was not good for the discipline. More specifically, both argued that research monographs act as a barometer on the state of the discipline. More than journal articles, they are noticed by non-geographers (Sheppard, 2006). And they last. Academics inside and outside geography are more likely to remember books, regardless of the quality of some journal articles (see Barnes, this Forum; Blunt, this Forum; McDowell, this Forum). Behind this set of circumstances were, it was argued, on the one hand, the UK's RAE and its university-specific variations, and, on the other, the global restructuring of the publishing industry (Kitchin and Fuller, 2005; Thompson, 2005a).

Others have been more sanguine. Martin (2001), for example, salutes the 'explosion in geography publishing', one aspect of which is a growth in the number of new geography books. He lists Guilford, Oxford University Press and Routledge as joining more traditional geography publishers such as Arnold, Blackwell, Longman and Wiley. His appears to be a more upbeat account than those offered by Thrift (2002) and Harvey (2006). Yet Martin (2001: 3, emphasis added) also argued: 'the primary foci of the revamped [RGS-IBG] series will be on high quality research monographs, thus providing an important outlet for this type of book at a time when *publishers seem to be shifting their preferences to undergraduate texts*'. Perhaps, then, Martin's (2001) view on the scope for geographers to publish research monographs is not that removed from Thrift (2002) and Harvey (2006), and is more akin to that of Kitchin and Fuller (2005: 74), who contend

that because research monographs are seen as 'having small, niche markets ... publishers are seeking more pedagogic texts'.

These interventions are interesting and thought-provoking. They have provided a rich topic for debate and discussion from UK department coffee mornings through to international conference dinners. In the absence of systematic data (Johnston, this Forum) perhaps this is as far as these types of interventions can go. Nevertheless, taken together they provide a useful point of departure for this Forum, which consists of 11 contributions, organized around five issues. In bringing together a series of contributions that expand our knowledge on the writing and publishing of research monographs, each author draws, first, on the available empirical evidence from their national contexts. This will be shown to be uneven and patchy. Second, the Forum moves beyond accounts which generalize from the UK experience. Even if we were to assume that existing commentaries have captured accurately the writing and publishing of monographs in the UK, there is no *a priori* reason to expect the pattern to be a general one. Third, the Forum considers international differences in the ways in which the assessment of academic performance affects the capacity or willingness of geographers to write and publish research monographs. In this it builds on the earlier PiHG Forum on research assessment 'exercises' (Castree *et al.*, 2006). Fourth, the papers consider the ways in which structural changes in the global publishing industry affect different national contexts unevenly. Individual contributors reflect on the changing ways in which domestic and international publishers combine to shape the publishing context for geographers across a range of countries. This has changed greatly in the last 5–10 years. The 'scholarly [or research] monograph supply chain' and the wider 'field' of which it is part, as Thompson (2005a: 85) puts it, has been deeply and profoundly restructured. Finally, the different contributions reflect on how publishing books matters (or) not to the discipline of geography.

The contributions to the Forum highlight a number of common issues. For example, there is little agreement over what constitutes a 'research monograph'. Kitchin and Fuller (2005: 75) define one as a 'specialist text aimed at fellow researchers ... usually narrow in scope and technically and theoretically sophisticated'. This is a definition with which I am happy but is not one with which all contributors agree. Different national structures reward the publication of research monographs in different ways. In a number of cases, national systems are making the writing of monographs less and less appealing, as the emphasis is on publishing in a small number of ISI (Institute for Scientific Information) recognized journals. The attractiveness or otherwise of writing a research monograph is closely bound up with the career stage. In some national contexts it is junior faculty who are required to write research monographs to get promotion or tenure; in other cases it is senior geographers who feel they have the time to write books. Across nations, publishing in English continues to gain increased academic currency. For good or bad, it appears to have become the international standard in the global university system.

What all contributors do agree on is that, for the future of geography, research monographs are important. Whatever the national context, they remain barometers of an intellectually vibrant discipline. Despite the effort involved, they remain immensely rewarding accomplishments and important statements of scholarship.

Kevin Ward
University of Manchester

Part I: The decline of the scholarly monograph in geography – some 'evidence' and speculations

Discussions of trends in geographical book publishing operate with a dearth of verifiable data. David Harvey's (2006: 410) claim that 'it seems pretty plain to me that the art

of writing monographs ... (substantive as opposed to theoretical or ideational treatises) has largely disappeared among the younger generation of British geographers' thus requires evaluation. A series of quadrennial reviews of British geography is used here to provide a far-from-perfect data source for that task.

In 1960 two geographers produced a 'National Report', published in *The Geographical Journal*, to be circulated at the quadrennial XIXth International Geographical Congress.¹ No similar reports were published in 1964 and 1968 but the practice was revived in 1972 and continued until 2000; the 2004 IGC, held in Glasgow, had no such report.

Nine published reports on contemporary British geography are thus available for analysis. Each was prepared by two authors, who consulted widely. Their main focus was research developments, as illustrated by selected publications listed in substantial bibliographies. The selections were necessarily subjective and particular to the authors' predilections. Nevertheless, these extensive bibliographies provide unrivalled lists of publications considered representative of the discipline's practices in each quadrennium.

The bibliographies' contents have been classified as books or articles, the latter including both journal papers and chapters in edited books. The totals in each category are shown in Table 1. The 1972 selection stands out – Steel and Wreford Watson listed very few articles – but from then on a clear trend appears: the number of books cited relative to articles falls very substantially, forming only about one-quarter of the cited items in the last two. These data may not be representative of UK geography publishing over those four decades but the trend resonates with anecdotal claims, accepting that the balance between the two categories might differ if a full census were feasible.²

The category 'book' covers a range of products, however, so the lists have been quickly scanned to separate out monographs from textbooks, readers, collections of

Table 1 The number of articles, books and (within the latter category) monographs identified as representative of UK geographers' published work, 1960–2000

Year	Authors	Articles	Books	Monographs
1960	Edwards/Crone	177	56	17
1972	Steel/Wreford Watson	11	97	31
1976	Cooke/Robson	101	102	27
1980	Doornkamp/Warren	132	116	33
1984	Munton/Goudie	128	159	40
1988	Bennett/Thornes	131	161	44
1992	Gardner/Hay	164	79	15
1996	Richards/Wrigley	157	40	11
2000	Thrift/Walling	322	78	24

articles on a common theme, festschrifts, and what Harvey calls 'theoretical or ideational treatises'.³ Monographs were 'defined' as the products of major research enterprises. Most were single-authored, in stark contrast to the situation with other types of book: in 1960, for example, 83% of all of the books listed were single-authored/edited; by 2000 that had fallen to 45% (indicative of the growing number of multi-edited collections being published).

The results of this subjective classification are in Table 1's final column. The number of monographs was never high – averaging between one-quarter and one-third between 1972 and 1988. But there is considerable evidence of decline over the last three reports, although with something of a recovery in 2000, which fits with wider views of publishing (for example, Thompson, 2005b). So why? I briefly explore two sets of reasons.

On the *supply side* there is evidence that substantial recent changes in academic practices have reduced the probability of individuals wanting to publish monographs. The UK Research Assessment Exercises (RAEs) are frequently associated with this: Harvey (2006: 410) considers it 'the most obvious cause'. The early RAEs, in Harvey's terms, set quantitative publication norms and 3–4 separate articles became much more desirable than them appearing as a monograph's major chapters. RAE-like exercises have been introduced elsewhere (Castree *et al.*, 2006)

but are far from universal. Nevertheless quantitative norm-setting has infiltrated other areas of academic practice (see Luke, 2000): many (most? all?) university promotion procedures incorporate publication-counting exercises. Furthermore, such measures increasingly rely – as will the next UK RAE (the Research Excellence Framework), at least for scientific disciplines⁴ – on citation counts, linked to journal impact factors, which excludes books: publish in refereed journals covered by ISI or your work won't count!

On the *demand side* publishers claim that monograph sales have declined because of tight library budgets, exacerbated by increased journal prices that academic libraries feel impelled to meet. Markets may be declining too. Increased workload pressures may mean less time to read widely! In smaller geographical markets publishing academic monographs remains a marginal activity (sustainable only if authors meet many of the costs, providing print-ready manuscripts which receive little or no copy-editing). How many geography research monographs have been published in Australia and New Zealand in the last decade, for example? The largest international publishers seem increasingly to concentrate on texts and 'supplemental textbooks'. Companions, Dictionaries, Encyclopaedias, Handbooks and Readers are preferred to monographs (Thompson, 2005b; Harvey, 2006).

Geography may be in a poorer position in this context than other social sciences and humanities where some academic books attract a general readership – as in particular types of history, political science and sociology. In part this is because our academic discipline differs more from the general conception of ‘geography’ than is the case for, say, ‘history’. Popular magazines such as *National Geographic* and *Geographical* create an alternative, popular ‘geography’ for wide readerships, promoting it not only as concerned with exotic places and peoples but also very much a visual subject – as do TV channels (of which *National Geographic* has its own). Some geographers have long bemoaned their discipline’s lack of a public profile; in part this is because others purvey a different version of geography to wider audiences and academic works do not attract wide audiences accordingly.

There are still geographers (even young geographers) who want to produce monographs, however, and companies that will publish them. (They include those close to being ‘vanity publishers’, but some leading publishing houses sustain academic monograph production by cross-subsidizing it from more profitable business areas.) But the downward trend is clear; I doubt it will readily be reversed.

Ron Johnston
University of Bristol

Part II: The monograph is dead: long live the monograph!

Obituaries of the monograph are premature! The following observations justify this conclusion from three linked perspectives. The first is that, contrary to anecdotal belief, there is no reason to suppose that the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) necessarily stifles the production of monographs. The second is that the concept of the monograph is so inconsistently defined that apparent decline may be merely a shift in kind. And the third, in that context, is that as a published form the

monograph is alive and kicking, at least in the environmental sciences.

The RAE has been blamed for the decline of the monograph (Harvey, 2006), but then it has been blamed for a lot of things. At an early stage in the 2008 RAE, the criteria for grading outputs were developed and were the subject of consultation in the academic community. This raised the suggestion that a ‘super-book’ might be submitted for assessment that could count as more than one output. A panel might agree that its grade would stand for two or more output items. However, this generated typical angst. Clearly there is a risk that if a panel gives such a book a low grade, the author will have committed too many eggs to this solitary basket. What if the panel does not consider that the book is particularly substantial compared to four good journal articles? Should there be a maximum number of lesser outputs to which a book-length product might be deemed equivalent? Perhaps also, in case the egg goes pear-shaped, there could be a nominated reserve? And so it went on ... until the idea was largely dropped. The fact that it was is evidence that can be spun into an argument that monograph authorship is in decline because of the RAE. But a benign proposal responding to criticism that the RAE discourages the large-scale, quintessentially academic project of the monograph was neatly undermined by the time-honoured process of academic discourse.

If there is concern that ‘the monograph’ is under threat, it seems that there is little evidence for this beyond the anecdotal – and a contradictory anecdote could be that the RGS-IBG Book Series has published a dozen books since 2004, none of which was mentioned by Harvey. Indeed, if one was to ask academic geographers to list monographs published in the 2001–2007 period which have impressed them, it is highly likely that these will be non-overlapping lists. In the absence of extensive empirical evidence of decline, one might return to first principles and ask if the seven-year period of the

RAE really is too short to write and publish monographs (Gandy, this Forum). Here, there is evidence that some authors have not had a problem. There are authors who submit two or more book-length outputs in a single RAE period; a former (sadly, now deceased) colleague of mine, Robin Donkin, published four between 1976 and 1980. Thus, it can be done in spite of the RAE, if it is the mode of communication favoured by an individual scholar. It does not have to be the mode of all scholars, at all times; and there can be no presumption, either, that writing something called a 'monograph' automatically assigns a mark of quality. Interestingly, there seems an underlying tendency to equate things called monographs with scholarship and quality, when, perhaps, one does not write a monograph, one writes a book, and a *post hoc* recognition of certain attributes and qualities then justifies assignment of the label 'monograph' (Barnes, this Forum).

If valid empirical evidence of a decline in monograph production existed, it would need explanation. One intellectually satisfying account could be that it reflects the increasing importance of interdisciplinary perspectives and the difficulty for one author of mastering the breadth of material. But why should multiple authorship be denied this quality label (see below)? Alternatively, it might be that a decline in monographs reflects a preference for other forms of output, particularly in journals – which certainly seem to have proliferated. If this is the cause, academics are highly complicit, since they seem only too willing to propose new journal titles and to become members of their editorial boards. Again, it could be that a decline reflects increasing administrative and teaching loads, leading academics to publish pithy journal articles, written in the all-too-short gaps between tutorials and committee meetings. This may be because of a declining unit of resource in university funding; the increased bureaucratization of higher education; the preferences or prejudices of university man-

agers; and the anecdotal evidence that such managers, perhaps in some cases with good reason, encourage individuals to publish journal articles rather than more substantial outputs that suffer greater risk of non-completion by key deadlines (Blunt, this Forum). Finally, and this is as likely as any explanation, the decline could reflect those wider sociocultural changes that have increasingly reduced all of our attention spans in relation to almost everything; and having succumbed to this pressure, how convenient an external scapegoat the RAE may then seem.

We should also return to definitions. Google 'monograph definition', and what emerges is 'a detailed and documented treatise on a particular subject'.⁵ In 27 online definitions, only two refer to single authorship, while several do refer to single *subjects*. The Wikipedia definition reads: 'A monograph is a scholarly book or a treatise on a single subject or a group of related subjects, usually written by one person.'⁶ This is one of the two cases that indicate single authorship, but even this does not *require* a monograph to have a sole author. Routledge, in describing one of its book series, states: 'We would define a monograph as a high-level research book (either single-authored or edited) ... aimed at postgraduates, researchers and academics.'⁷ These definitions all imply that there is no clear view as to what constitutes a monograph, and suggest that *content* may be a more consistently employed criterion than *authorship* (or even editorship). To return to the point about interdisciplinarity, a count of monographs based on the assumption that a single author must be involved could quite possibly indicate a decline, relative if not absolute, if more authors were tending to write collaboratively on topics that cut across disciplinary boundaries. However, those multi-authored (or edited) works may be just as deserving of the intellectual kudos that goes with the title 'monograph'.

Surprisingly, perhaps, in physical geography and the environmental and earth

sciences, the monograph is alive and well. The Geological Society of America (GSA) publishes peer-reviewed scholarly books that it calls Special Papers and Memoirs (there are over 100). The former are state-of-the-art treatments of rapidly evolving subjects; Memoirs are authoritative reference works. The Geological Society of London also publishes Memoirs – definitive treatments of their subjects by acknowledged experts. However, they can be edited collections of papers, or they can be written by a *single group of authors*. While not explicitly referred to as monographs, they bear the general hallmarks of the genre. The American Geophysical Union (AGU) does publish what it calls monographs (there are 140), in a series including ‘monographic works and compilations of papers on a single topic’. Many of these are multidisciplinary. Typical examples create research frameworks through taxonomic emphasis (Richardson and Carling, 2005), or present meticulous fieldwork that revises previous theoretical models (Branney and Kokelaar, 2002). The principle of major publications with scholarly and focused content is very much alive in the environmental and earth sciences. If one allows the cavalier approach to authorship in these series, and defines the genre by its content, then the monograph is a favoured publication mode in these areas of science.

In RAE terms, such works may often be submitted as major, influential, possibly ground-breaking, often original, and potentially 4* pieces of research output among the burgeoning numbers of mundane journal articles that, the evidence suggests, rather few people actually read!⁸ In fact, to judge from the research on bibliometrics reported by van Raan *et al.* (2007) and used by the Higher Education Funding Council to support its intended shift towards a metrics-based assessment procedure after 2008 (the Research Excellence Framework), a strategy to ensure high ratings might well be to publish very selectively in more substantial forms in order to prevent the accumulation of a

tail of zero-cited work that will suppress the overall impact factor. This might therefore drive a radical shift in publication profiles that will jeopardize the health of some journals, and favour the high-quality, highly citable review article ... or monograph. But don't quote me on this!

Keith Richards
University of Cambridge

Part III: Books, geography and disciplinary status – an Anglo-American view

A sobering indication of the disappointing range of books in geography can be illustrated by visiting a university bookshop. Take the example of the Gower Street Waterstone's in central London, a large bookshop serving the Bloomsbury quarter of the University of London. A snap visit to the geography section in 2007 revealed only 188 titles: of these just four books were based on substantial primary research and a further four took the form of a critical synthesis of published sources. Every other book was a textbook, edited collection or anthology of some kind with the exception of five examples of ‘grey literature’, mostly UN reports. In leading academic bookshops elsewhere, such as St Mark's in New York City or La Hune in Paris, there is no geography section at all.

Writing in the *Times Higher*, the European publishing director for Princeton University Press recently made a series of critical observations on academic book publishing in the UK. First, the drift towards various forms of ‘bibliometric’ measurement is altering the way people work and what they publish. Second, the intense pressure to publish articles, especially in the natural sciences, is ‘indicative of a trend towards short-termism and narrowness of focus in British academe’ (Baggaley, 2007). Third, disciplines are defined by their books in terms of their perception within the wider academy. Fourth, the advent of new electronic media has not diminished the significance

or importance of books. Fifth, the average academic book is likely to reach a larger and wider readership than the average journal article. Sixth, books feature prominently among the most cited publications even for subjects such as economics that rely heavily on a few key journals. Finally, the likely shift to a more metrics-based replacement for the RAE will accelerate current trends thereby intensifying the focus on specific journals and further diminishing the possibilities for innovation, risk or longer-term research. In the case of geography it is clear that books remain pivotal for the circulation of ideas. A recent review of work in economic geography since the early 1980s shows that books are of critical importance to the discipline as evidenced by citation indices (Foster *et al.*, 2007). Similar evidence could be presented with respect to other fields of geography where books have had a demonstrable impact on external perceptions of the discipline. Yet many of the most frequently cited authors have spent all or part of their careers in North America: it is in the UK that the prospects for book publishing seem especially problematic.

The publishing of books is critical for the interdisciplinary and international standing of the discipline. This is especially the case in the United States where the relative importance of disciplines and the building of individual careers is driven to a greater degree by books than in the UK. The array of important books consistently produced in cognate disciplines such as anthropology and history helps to explain the flourishing of these disciplines within top US universities. We cannot rely on journals to plug the gap since flagship publications such as the *Annals* or *Transactions* are absent from many leading US universities. As a consequence, geographical work within journals edited by geographers is mainly encountered through interdisciplinary publications such as *Antipode* and *Environment and Planning*.

UK geographers who wish to publish their research in book form face a predicament.

Compared with leading US publishers many academic publishers in the UK provide a poor-quality service in terms of perfunctory editorial guidance, careless proof-reading, unaccountable delays and lamentable design.⁹ This situation is perhaps made worse for geography by the narrow range of publishers who are most frequently approached with proposals. Despite the inferior design and production quality of many academic books produced in the UK, these are often significantly more expensive than titles offered by leading US publishers such as Chicago, Harvard or MIT. Not only is design and editorial support far superior in the USA but books also benefit from better marketing and distribution with higher levels of professionalism at every stage in the process.

The reasons for the problems facing academic publishing in the UK are complex. They are in part driven by intensifying commercial pressures and the lack of a coherent vision for academic publishing. Furthermore, many senior geographers who shape the careers of their junior colleagues tend to be unaware of the stark differences between book publishers. Many leading UK publishers deploy a cursory review procedure whereas leading US publishers generally use a two-stage process, beginning with the commissioning of a project followed by a close reading of the final manuscript by several readers along with detailed correspondence between authors and editorial committees over suggested changes. In the case of UK geography, only vague differentiation is made between publishers. Some departments actively discourage book publishing altogether. The recent decision by *Transactions* to cease the publication of book reviews seems only to reinforce a sense of marginality for books within the UK discipline: their last reviews appeared in March 2005. There is only patchy acknowledgement that a research monograph is likely to take at least seven years from start to finish – sometimes longer – a cycle which sits uncomfortably with the short-term

demands of the RAE and the perceived equivalence between one book and one journal article (Richards, this Forum). The growing interest in altering the form of a PhD qualification so that it is no longer an extended piece of writing but a series of articles is also likely to reduce the necessary skills needed to write academic books (Tahir, 2007). There are increasing pressures to alter the traditional PhD into a 'training' exercise in order to facilitate graduate recruitment, ensure quicker completion rates and also respond to the ever-changing demands of the UK Research Councils.

Beyond the specific differences between US and UK publishing, developments affecting geography as a discipline have contributed towards a reluctance to produce larger or more ambitious forms of scholarly output. In the wake of recent critiques of 'grand theory', attempts to evoke a 'bigger picture' have tended to be elided with anachronistic, naïve or uncritical modes of writing. There has been a movement away from more ambitious disciplinary interventions in part because the conceptual terrain of cross-cutting theoretical debates is such precarious ground. Yet an emphasis on book publishing may begin to redress geography's legacy of institutional marginalization and help to connect the discipline with new audiences both within and outside the academy. A common refrain is that geography consistently misses opportunities to lead research in crucial areas of concern that appear to correspond with the discipline's core intellectual terrain. We are currently faced with a double challenge to raise our status within the academy and within the public arena. If we were to reinterpret the emerging bureaucratic mantra of 'knowledge transfer' as a need to publish great books, then perhaps the interests of geography and the wider academy might begin to coalesce more convincingly.

Matthew Gandy
University College London

Part IV: On the monograph in Polish human geography

A 'research monograph' means the same thing in Poland and other Central and Eastern European Countries as it does elsewhere in the world. The term comes from Greek *mònos* – the only – and *grapho* – to write – and denotes 'scientific work depicting thoroughly one issue (discipline, period, one person's *curriculum vitae*)' (Instytut Informacji Naukowej, Technicznej i Ekonomicznej, 1979: 77). The definition is in line with the monograph being a 'detailed, learned account, especially a published report on one particular subject' (Hornby, 1977: 555), or a 'learned treatise on a small area of learning; also a written account of a single thing' (Longman, 1985: 948). A more precise definition developed in 2006 by the then Polish Department of Education and Science is: 'a monograph should be understood as a serious multipage scientific study, published as a book or a separate volume (exceptionally being its substantial part) of an academic journal, being a creative and exhaustive presentation of an issue and embracing either new scientific results obtained by an author, or new original theoretical conceptions shown on the background of state-of-the-art discipline achievements to date; as a monograph can be taken an atlas or other cartographic work, and as a chapter of monograph – a map.'¹⁰

Geography as an academic discipline in Poland has changed in the last two decades. Research is now carried out by about 1200 professional geographers at the Stanisław Leszczycki Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization of the Polish Academy of Sciences (abbreviated hereinafter as IGiPZ), at the universities and teacher training colleges, within the framework of the Polish Geographical Society – the national geographic learned society – as well as in some schools of economics and agriculture and some universities of technology and at naval academies. In the case of the Polish

Academy of Sciences – the national body that oversees and coordinates numerous research committees and institutes – most researchers work within human geography (as compared with physical geography in the universities). The number of traditional university departments increased from nine in the early 1980s (Taylor, 1985) to 11 in 2006 (Liszewski and Plit, 2006). The number of geographical centres at the teacher training colleges remains the same – in Cracow, Kielce and Słupsk. Geography is taught as a subsidiary subject, at many of the newly created private high schools. So, overall human geography continues to be taught at numerous academic institutions in Poland.

The means through which to publish Polish geographical work are now much greater than they were prior to 1989. At least four periodicals are national in range and general (ie, physical and human) in character – *Przegląd Geograficzny* (the Polish Geographical Review, as the oldest, founded in 1919, and since 1954 published by IGiPZ), *Czasopismo Geograficzne* (the Geographical Journal, published in Wrocław by the Polish Geographical Society), *Polski Przegląd Kartograficzny* (the Polish Cartographical Review, published in Warsaw by the Polish Geographical Society jointly with the PPWK cartographic publisher) and *Geographia Polonica* (IGiPZ). The number of periodicals published in English has increased to five: besides *Geographia Polonica* (founded in the 1960s), the human geography titles include *Questiones Geographicae* (series B: Human Geography and Spatial Management, published in Poznań), *European Spatial Research and Policy* (published in Łódź in collaboration with three Western European universities), and *Geopolitical Studies* and *Europa XXI* (both published by the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization, Polish Academy of Sciences).

In Poland, theses (at PhD level or as the ‘habilitation dissertation’, which can be undertaken at eight of the country’s universities plus the Institute of Geography and

Spatial Organization, Polish Academy of Sciences¹¹) are usually published as books. There is a legal obligation that the ‘habilitation dissertation’ be published, although there are no guidelines on who should publish it. Many PhD holders insist on their own university presses publishing their thesis, regardless of the quality of the press. If we add together the number of new PhD holders across Polish geography (on average 61 per annum in the years 2004–2006) and the number of ‘Habilitation Doctors’ (almost 10, according to the data collected by the Committee on Geographical Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences), then one could argue that too many theses of one sort or another are being published.

In this situation, where the norm is for theses to be published, post-thesis monographs, or those that draw on thesis research but take the studies further are a rarity in Poland, although the majority of Polish university presses have a series called ‘Monographs and Studies’. Another outlet for geography monographs is the professional publishing houses, eg, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN (Polish Scientific Publishers, now owned by a foreign firm), or in the private, newly founded Bogucki Wydawnictwo Naukowe located in Poznań and publishing on behalf of the Faculty of Geography and Geology of the Adam Mickiewicz University.

We can look at the series ‘Monografie’ (Monographs) of the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization as an illustration. The series, launched in 1997, has published nine books to date. Like the RGS-IBG Book Series, it embraces ‘scholarly monographs and edited collections of academic papers at the leading edge of research in human and physical geography’, although the majority of its books are in physical not human geography.

Monographs are and will be needed in future, at least to disseminate knowledge to wider audiences. A more pressing issue, I think, is that they are also needed by

researchers themselves, allowing us to reflect on today's state-of-the-art geographical scholarship, where we as a discipline are, what we know about a phenomenon or process, and what should be done in the future. In this way monographs can have a longer shelf-life than the theses published for more restricted audiences, whose permanence can be questioned (Gandy, this Forum; Sheppard, 2006).

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Part V: The transformation of publishing practices in continental Europe and the Nordic countries

Language is central to scientific practice. Facts, arguments and theories are constructed, communicated and evaluated in the form of written statements (Bourdieu, 2004). English, spoken as a mother tongue by some 300–400 million people, is the major language in academic publishing, but it is important to remember that European languages such as Spanish are spoken by more than 350 million people, German by almost 100 million, Italian by 70 million and French by 77 million. Such linguistic communities have provided a strong basis for academic publishing in national languages, especially in human geography, which was for a long time regarded as a national field. This idea is now undergoing transformation outside the English-speaking world. Publications in national languages are increasingly being replaced by papers in international journals and edited collections. 'International' means in this context publications by major Anglophone publishing houses (for example, Routledge, Sage and Wiley-Blackwell) and, in the case of journals, increasingly by those that are indexed by the Thomson ISI database. Such English-language-based 'internationality' has been challenged by non-English-speaking scholars (and not merely

geographers) but this tendency seems to be irreversible (Paasi, 2005). While articles published in English are increasingly typical among non-English-speaking geographers, nevertheless monographs/books published by such international publishers are still rare and such major works are still published in the author's native language.

This commentary maps such transformations in some non-English-speaking countries and traces their structural elements. It does this on the basis of a brief survey. I look at current trends in the Nordic states, where strong pressures towards 'international publishing' are emerging. I compare these developments with the situation in larger countries (Germany, France, Spain and Italy) and smaller ones (the Netherlands and Hungary). The former has a strong tradition in international publishing (the major publishing house, Elsevier, is headquartered in Amsterdam), while geography there has been more nationally orientated. Hungary is an example of a former Eastern European state that is taking its first steps into international scientific orientation.

My primary observation is that space makes a difference: the states are divided as to the role of monographs, and this is related to their relative power in the 'linguistic market'. 'Latin' Europe (France, Italy and Spain) has a strong tradition in publishing monographs, and the tendency towards Anglophone international journals is not as pronounced as in smaller linguistic communities. Large scholarly publications are important in French geography (in obtaining diplomas, for example) but the label 'monograph' is not used because of its association with the classical Vidalian regional geographic tradition. Journal articles published in English are rare and unimportant. In the form of a salary-linked system, Spanish science policy encourages publishing papers in international journals. Monographs in Italian are important in Italian human geography, and papers and monographs published in English are rare. Only one journal of human geography

from Latin Europe (from Spain) is included in the ISI database.

The German-speaking geographical community is the largest in Europe. Monographs are written in German and single-authored books (often PhD theses) are important. Suhrkamp and Steiner Verlag provide respected national forums for such monographs. The published 'habilitation thesis' has traditionally been a significant step in pursuing an academic career in Germany and Hungary, and these works have often been monographs published in the national language. A formal thesis is no longer mandatory for this purpose in Germany, however, and a 'cumulative thesis' based on papers published in journals is increasingly being accepted. Monographs published in English by German or Hungarian geographers are rare. No particular (governmental) pressure towards international publication exists in Germany, but articles published in leading Anglophone journals are respected.

In Hungary, current claims for international article publishing come from the Academy of Science. Three ISI-indexed geographical journals that publish papers mainly in German (with an abstract in English) provide a 'home venue' for German geographers to respond to the challenge of 'index-based' internationality. Some German economic geographers in particular publish papers in English in established Anglophone journals.

Monographs and publications in national languages are losing their position in Nordic human geography: increasingly it is papers in international journals that 'count'. These circumstances may reflect generational differences or personal choices by scholars searching for broader international engagement. This internationalization is based on structural realities as well, especially on measures taken by the respective ministries of education. One medium is the EU strategy of increasing competitiveness. In small language areas such as the Nordic countries or the Netherlands, the state authorities and politicians take 'international competition'

very seriously and use funding mechanisms to modify publishing practices. Publishing is directed through reward systems (Paasi, 2005). This will inevitably lead to the standardized governance of research, which will in turn, paradoxically, imply a certain 'scientific nationalism' – efforts to raise the 'national scientific output' to a higher level than that of other states. Norway is not a member of the EU but it makes active use of science policy to direct publishing activities, while the EU countries of Denmark, Sweden and Finland seem to be following these Norwegian ideas in part. Only one Nordic journal is indexed by the ISI. While publishing in international journals is becoming common in this context, international monographs are few.

Monographs have gradually been losing their position in Dutch human geography, papers in international journals being the order of the day. Competition for academic posts and the search for status have led to the valuing of monograph publishing in top Anglophone academic publishers over all other publishers. At the same time, however, Dutch has partly maintained its role as the language of publishing in the areas of applied geography and planning.

The question of the role of monographs is thus context-dependent. Differences already exist in the case of PhD theses. Where a PhD thesis is not normally published in the UK or the USA, in other countries publication of the thesis *before* defending it is required and this often takes the form of a monograph. This situation is changing, however, and in Finland and Sweden a thesis can now consist of papers already published in journals together with a synopsis. The similar case of the German 'habilitation thesis' shows that this model is perhaps becoming more common outside the English-speaking world.

This brief survey suggests that in European countries new directives are emerging in science policy over the publication of research. States are adapting to the globalization of some scientific practices, which is leading to the standardization of publishing

cultures and 'academic capitalism' (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Paasi, 2005). Institutions of higher education have become a medium for (neoliberal) competition and accountability. The evaluation and ranking of publishing forums has become common. This supports the publishing of papers in international journals, which are ISI-ranked and represent 'a gold standard against which other products are valued in the hierarchy of academic commodities' (Smith, 2000: 332–33). In the worst case, this restricts human geography to the pages of a narrow number of journals. These are acute problems in the English-speaking world and beyond it. Human geographers, along with other social scientists, have to work to show the absurdity of comments such as the one from a Professor of Technology at a recent meeting of the science council of my university: 'Books – they are not science, are they?' That this was expressed publicly makes the situation even more frustrating!

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Part VI: Thoughts from the zoo

This short commentary sketches South Africa's geographical publishing record, showing its limited nature and its racially/institutionally skewed legacy. According to a South African 2000–2001 survey of the discipline, 'while there is a tendency for publications in journals to be weighed most highly, the publication of scholarly books should be encouraged' (Fairhurst *et al.*, 2003: 139). Recent policy developments, derived from northern contexts, are I argue, likely to have negative impacts on monograph publishing within the country. There is hope, however. In what follows I highlight how the domination of South African research and publishing agendas by northern editorial, publishing and rating systems is being contested on the ground.

In 2003, there were 21 geography departments in South African universities with a

total of 185 staff and, in that year, 177 publications (Fairhurst *et al.*, 2003). Departments were small. The average size was eight or nine staff. The 2004 reconfiguration of the Higher Education system means there are now 11 'traditional' universities and six 'comprehensive' universities (those which offer both traditional subjects and applied courses) that house geography departments. Two former Afrikaans medium-sized institutions (Stellenbosch and Pretoria) have responded to recent change by recruiting research staff and have joined in the top tier: the University of Cape Town, the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Visser, 2007). In the second tier are Rhodes University, the University of the Western Cape and the four smaller geography departments from former Afrikaans medium-sized universities. In the third tier are six of the former historically disadvantaged departments.

In the 1980s, research output largely came from English-speaking, white liberal universities. As Visser (2007) notes, researchers there, through their Anglo-American training links, knew where to 'place' research papers to maximize their international profile. Through the 1990s, academic publication across all disciplines was largely a white male preserve (Hendricks, 2004). In 1998, for example, 92% of all academic publications came from white academics. In the 1996–2000 National Report for the International Geographical Union, 66% of all publications came from the historically advantaged (formerly white) departments (Fairhurst *et al.*, 2003), and some publishing in historically disadvantaged (formerly black) departments was by their white academics. A more reliable figure comes from Sumner (2006), who showed that 22% of all geographical publications from 2000 to 2004 had a black author and in 69% of these the black author was the sole or first author.

Tables 2 and 3 summarize the publications data from South Africa's National Reports for the International Geographical Union (South African National Committee, 2000; 2004).

They show that academics average less than one output per year. The majority of the publishing has been in subsidy-earning journal articles (those on the ISI master journal list or approved South African journal list¹²). The overall trend is upwards but there have been sharp annual fluctuations caused by the relatively small number of academics behind the outputs (Fairhurst *et al.*, 2003). Table 2 shows that a small number of books are produced. Local and international commercial publishing houses have been used by South African authors, who also publish in series at the Human Sciences Research Council, Africa Institute of South Africa and many of the former Afrikaans medium-sized universities.

Table 3 shows that the main growth area has been in book chapters. Since 2004, however, the Department of Education's subsidy funding formula requires institutions and authors to provide evidence of independent peer review for book chapters and research monographs. Failure to do so results in funding being cut. 'The current subsidy system has no place for the monograph' (Higgins, 2008: 2), encouraging the publication of articles in a small number of northern journals.

Visser (2007) has been highly critical of the South African national rating system for

colonizing human geography by importing northern norms, asking: 'which zoo for South African human geography?' Horton (2000) is equally damning in his appraisal of the policies of northern journals, editors and referees. As he puts it: 'Print and on-line subscriptions are too high; page charges, even with a waiver, put off would-be authors; and reprint costs are prohibitive. All these factors inhibit the development of local research cultures, turn investigators away from Northern journals, and foster a feeling of bitterness towards publishers' (Horton, 2000: 2232–33). Should the zoo specimens – South African human geographers – therefore turn to innovative means such as open source publishing and free themselves from the dictates and constraints of the north, opening up the work to many more in the global south? This is something for future consideration.

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Part VII: National projects and geographic monographs in the Andean-Amazon area

Geographical knowledge about the Andean-Amazon area¹³ – which comprises Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela – was,

Table 2 South African National Reports to the IGU: publications 1996–2004

	1996	1997	1998	1999*	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004*
Total publications	126	129	105	53	121	112	165	177	154
Journal articles	89	101	73	42	70	80	120	149	106
Journals percentage	71	78	70	79	58	71	73	84	69
Books	4	3	4	3	10	7	7	3	1
Books percentage	3	2	4	6	8	6	4	2	1

*IGU report year figures will be under-recorded

Table 3 Book chapters published 1996–2004

	Human Geography	Physical Geography	General	Total
1996–1999 report	63	11	7	81
2000–2004 report	110	28	3	141

until the eighteenth century, usually written by Europeans and published in their countries. These works were produced in the context of travel and collection, in languages other than Spanish, and were aimed at the international scientific community. The bibliographical contribution of 'local' researchers and scientists remained marginal (Mignolo, 2003).

The geographical monographs produced by 'local' researchers written in the nineteenth century were deeply marked by this dilemma. 'Native' scientists and researchers needed to situate themselves – politically and epistemologically – in relation to the knowledge that was being produced in Europe about the nature of America and the 'torrid zone'. These concerns were at the centre of the creation of national geographical associations such as *Sociedad ecuatoriana de investigaciones históricas y geográficas* (1906) and *Sociedad geográfica de Colombia* (1903). Through their bulletins and journals, these associations established a physical geography tradition mainly concerned with the depiction of the abundance of tropical nature, and the diversity of climates, soils and resources that constituted the core of what may be considered 'national geographies'.

One of the conditions for the production of geographical knowledge *from* and about the area has been the permanent exchange between academia and institutional projects. The traffic between the two fields is one of the distinctive features of Latin American social sciences (Cardoso de Oliveira, 2000; Melgarejo and Fornazzari, 2000; Neiburg and Plotkin, 2004). Historically, 'local' researchers have engaged in sociopolitical projects, developing original perspectives based on their commitment to social undertakings. Such researchers have been engaged both in the production of knowledge and in the design of policies as activists. The distinction between 'pure' and applied knowledge or between academics and policy-makers has never been taken as meaningful.

Since geographical monographs have had as their primary audience the group involved

in setting the national project in motion, the state has been one of the main publishers, both through its different agencies – presidential offices, ministries, national printing companies – and through its national geographical institutes. These were created in the first half of the twentieth century in the five countries of the Amazon-Andean area, some of them in direct dependency on the military (as Bolivia's *Instituto Geográfico Militar*). They were directly responsible for most of the geographical research and publication until the 1960s. The monographs and articles published in their bulletins and journals were concerned with inventories of lands and resources and with the identification of economic activities for the development of individual national economies within the world-system – historically understood as the conditions of possibility for the consolidation of the nation and the state.

With the generalized adoption of modernization doctrines in the late twentieth century, the goals of the national projects were adjusted. States became the stewards of development, providing a privileged environment for the production of geographical knowledge. Since development practices follow the methodology of urban and regional planning, projects and institutions usually require and fund 'socio-economic diagnostics' or 'bio-geographical characterizations' of regions and localities. This practice has generated one of the main trends in the geographical knowledge produced in the area: that of 'regional studies', a field where specifically Latin American objects of study have emerged, such as 'refuge regions' or the multi-altitudinal occupation of the cordilleras. The specificity of the objects of study has influenced the choice and development of theoretical approaches. Certain regions have become the privileged 'field' for studies from ethnographic and phenomenological approaches interested in the study of landscape and sense of place (for example, rain forest regions inhabited by indigenous or maroon populations), while regions apparently more

in tune with the urban modern world are studied using more materialist sociological and economic approaches. Most regional monographs are published by development agencies, sometimes in association with university presses, and several international development aid agencies have become important promoters and publishers of this type of work.¹⁴

Academic geography programs have relied on development-related funding for research, and both faculty and students have been part of this type of socially engaged research. The production of geographical monographs within the field of development has also engaged with a critique from several Latin American theoretical perspectives such as dependency theory, liberation theology, participatory-action research and, more recently, the modernity/coloniality approach. University presses and journals have been important publishers for this type of work, as have several independent private publishing houses (such as Ecuador's Abya-Yala, or Colombia's Tercer Mundo Editores), which have specialized in the publication and distribution of critical works in the social sciences.

In the past two decades, the production of knowledge in the Amazon Andean area has been affected by the importance given to the internationalization of science and technology, understood as a requirement for competitiveness within the free-trade environment (Fox, this Forum; Paasi, this Forum; Taylor, this Forum). The strengthening of science and technology has become an important development goal (independently of the political orientation of each country's government). Although state funding for research remains one of the lowest in the world (CONICIT, 2008), and it is mostly directed to 'hard' sciences, technology and innovation, physical geography and geographical information systems do receive state support.

National science agencies now require universities and academic centres to follow the Latin American and Caribbean scientific

network (Red Scienti) standards, based on 'international' – North American – evaluation practices. Thus universities have increasingly been privileging and rewarding the publication of articles in indexed peer-reviewed international journals (preferably in English) over the publication of books and articles in national academic journals and publishing houses. This has resulted in an increasing tendency to publish outside local networks.

These relationships with national projects and with development programmes will probably continue to be a signature mark of the social sciences in Latin America and so, in the future, the production of geographic monographs will be linked to the area's main issues: on the one hand, water, biodiversity and climate change, particularly in relation to the Amazon; and, on the other, the assessment of the social and environmental impacts of the political and economic models applied in each country.

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Part VIII: To do or not to do?

Geographical monographs in East Asia

Monographs are extremely important in the humanities and social sciences in East Asia. In human geography, East Asian scholarship can be broadly divided into two categories along linguistic traditions. First, a large number of geography faculty staff trained in the Anglo-American tradition tend to publish in English. These geographers are mostly located in major geography departments throughout East Asia (in, for example, Hong Kong and Singapore and, to a certain extent, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea and Taiwan). Their interest and motives in publishing monographs in English through international and local presses are not significantly different from their peers elsewhere in Anglo-American geography. Second, a significant number of geographers in East Asia regularly publish monographs in vernacular language, primarily

aimed at local and national audiences within particular language communities (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Malay and so on). These monographs tend to be insulated from theoretical and empirical issues in Anglo-American geography. There seems, then, to be a dual monograph production system among geographers located in East Asia.

This historical trend towards monograph production in East Asia is the result of intricate demand and supply factors. On the demand side, the lack of a sufficiently large number of geography journals in either English or vernacular languages published in East Asia has compelled many geographers to seek publication outlets elsewhere. As acceptance in major international journals in geography is highly competitive and displays a certain degree of 'geographical bias' in favour of research work done in North America and Western Europe (Yeung, 2001; Garcia-Ramon, 2003), these East Asian geographers naturally turn to monographs, particularly those published locally, as an alternative means to disseminate their research findings. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in national contexts in which institutional pressure on academic output is weak or non-existent.

On the supply side, the growing internationalization of commercial publishers into East Asia – both as a huge market and as a source of aspiring authors – has undoubtedly fuelled this drive towards monographs. In geography, a large number of mostly UK-based publishers have established a strong presence in East Asia: Taylor and Francis (Routledge imprint and others), Wiley-Blackwell, Palgrave-Macmillan, Edward Elgar, Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Sage and so on. These international publishers are increasingly sourcing manuscripts directly from geographers in the region. Meanwhile, the rising affluence of many East Asian economies has also meant that their national and university-based publishers are active as not before. Many East Asian publishers actively seek relevant manuscripts

from geographers in order to satisfy the growing domestic market for in-depth scholarly analysis of contemporary issues. Their growing publishing activity also reflects their defensive strategy of countering the rising presence of international publishers in their home markets. This scenario for monographs in East Asia seems to contrast sharply with that in UK geography.

Let me now revisit the question posed in the title of my commentary. Given the favourable possibilities available to geographers in East Asia, why is it that some of them are still concerned with this 'to do or not to do' question? This has to do with the overwhelming role of international benchmarking of geographical scholarship in recent years (Paasi, this Forum). This imperative alone can account for the significant difference in attitudes towards monographs among different communities of human geographers in East Asia. Among those internationally orientated geographers, publishing monographs in English and/or vernacular languages is often not a top priority for two reasons. First, many of these geographers think that monographs are not only tedious to produce, but also limited in achieving intellectual objectives. Published by domestic publishers, monographs are potentially important for influencing both local and national audiences, but their impact on the international scholarly community is limited. If international publishers are mobilized in the production of monographs, their impact may remain modest, partly because of their limited circulation. For more effective dissemination, these geographers often turn to high-impact, internationally refereed journals.

Second, in their relentless drive towards global excellence, many academic institutions and their funding agencies in East Asia have privileged top journals over monographs (Kong, 1999). For promotion and tenure considerations, research articles published in the ISI-listed journals are often valued much more than monographs. The domination of physical sciences and engineering in

national research bodies further accentuates the importance of high-impact journal articles. In some extreme cases, there are explicit classification systems that delineate different tiers of book publishers (local/national versus international) and journals (local/national versus international). This institutional context has undoubtedly shaped the publication preferences and attitudes of active geographers based in East Asia.

Does this institutional bias against monographs necessarily lead to the demise of monograph publishing in East Asia? I don't think so. There remain many geographers (and their academic institutions) in East Asia not socialized into the competitive benchmarking of Anglo-American geography. The availability of a large domestic audience and potential home-based publishers remains a useful corrective to internationalism and institutional isomorphism. The existence of this dual-track monograph system allows for a diverse group of geographers to publish its work irrespective of theoretical and empirical orientations. Consequently, many geographers in East Asia less attuned to Anglo-American geography remain committed to monographs, particularly in their vernacular languages.

For this large community of nationally based geographers, my view is that monographs will remain as its standard means of academic dissemination and scholarship. As long as these languages remain the mainstay of those East Asian countries – a likely outcome despite the homogenizing tendencies of globalization – these geographers, their monographs and associated publishers will have a strong place in their home countries. They will continue to write monographs (as they have always done) and also develop a kind of (alternative) scholarship that may one day prove to be vital and sustainable in a world of academic Fordism. The longer-term implication of this continual vitality of monographs in East Asia is that the diversity of local voices can be preserved and reproduced. Whether they are directly relevant

to the kind of intellectual debates advanced in this journal is, I think, a moot point. More importantly, this diversity might provide the critical impetus for theory building by those geographers who can traverse spaces of monograph production both in English and vernacular languages. When that happens (and it is happening in East Asia), such a dual-track system will be both intellectually productive and sustainable through its reach at the local, national and global levels.

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National University of Singapore

Part IX: Standards? What standards?

The book fills a much-needed gap. (Moses Hadas¹⁵)

The lack of substantive monographs is worrying. (Harvey, 2006: 410)

One of the insights that I have gained from serving on the Faculty of Arts Promotion and Tenure Committee at the University of British Columbia is seeing how other disciplines do it. Sometimes it makes your hair stand on end. Economics has a holy quintet of journals, and if you publish in two of them you become a Full Professor. But under no circumstances should an economist write a book until they publish in the holy quintet. In Psychology, textbooks are good, but pure gold is the multi-authored scientific paper with triple-figure citations. In History and English, it is a single-authored book per professorial rank (but watch where you publish – no no-name presses and be careful with a publishing house that does something crass like make money). But in Geography anything goes. My non-geography colleagues on the committee rib me whenever a file of a geographer comes through: 'It's the discipline with no standards', they say. But the nice thing about standards is that there are so many of them. In this short essay, I argue for a plurality of standards, including standards around the disciplinary importance of

substantive research monographs, and, drawing on some limited empirical evidence, I say something briefly about the standards of human geography book publishing in my own country, Canada.

Let me begin by saying I have nothing against the research monograph. Its virtues are manifold (Blunt, this Forum; McDowell, this Forum; Ward, this Forum). But the point is that one could also wax lyrical about the extended essay (and which Jamie Peck recently has raised to a new art form in geography), or the crisply written journal article, the punchy research note or editorial, or the critical commentary and reply, or even the lowly book review. As types of writing each delivers: each has given up classic pieces that made a difference to the discipline. So, why be hung up about the book? Given the diversity of the material that human geographers write about, their varied methods, epistemologies, and disciplinary inspirations, shouldn't there be a corresponding multiplicity of literary forms? Gibson-Graham (2006: preface) suggest promiscuous reading, 'reading around,' but shouldn't there be also promiscuous writing, 'writing around?' Maybe geography is a 'loose' discipline, one without decent standards.

Clearly, though, and the catalyst for this Forum, is that some geographers, such as David Harvey (2006), are concerned that in the UK the Research Assessment Exercise favours quantity over quality, salami-thin journal papers over meaty monographs. Because of my involvement with the RAE (I am an international advisor to panel H, Geography and Environmental Science), I will not discuss the British scene. But I will comment briefly on academic book publishing in Canada, where I work, and the place of geography within it. I will suggest that there has been little change over the last 20 years in the internal structure of academic book publishing as an industry and as an individual faculty imperative.

Canadian academic publishing is dominated by university presses, three in particular:

McGill-Queen's, University of Toronto, and University of British Columbia. The first two have separate listings for geography (McGill-Queen's¹⁶ lists 30 titles, the University of Toronto¹⁷ 17), while the third, UBC Press,¹⁸ has no specifically identified geography books but at least two cognate catalogues, 'Environment and resource studies' and 'Planning', which together contain over 100 titles. The most significant commercial publisher of geographical texts is Oxford University Press (OUP) Canada,¹⁹ operating from Toronto and with 200 titles (although several are taken from OUP UK and US). In general, the university presses specialize in research monographs and edited collections, while OUP Canada tends towards textbooks (although not exclusively; for example, OUP Canada published Harald Bauder's (2006) monograph on labor movement, and Meric Gertler's (2004) monograph on manufacturing culture).

Canadian university presses rely on financial aid from the federal government through its research-grant arm, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, based in Ottawa. Originating in 1941, the Aid to Scholarly Publications Program's (ASPP)²⁰ had a 2005–2006 total budget close to CDN\$2.5m. Successful applicants (about half of those who apply) receive a grant of \$8000 that is transferred to publishers to defray costs. In a 2004 external management consultant's report of ASPP, it was found that over 70% of funds went to the three university presses listed above.²¹ It is unclear exactly how many books published by geographers benefited from the programme, but geography is listed among a small group of social sciences that received 15% of ASPP's funding for the period 1996–2004.

All of this is indirect evidence, I know, but it provides a sense of the character of academic book publishing in Canada. Geography clearly has some visibility within it, and, like other disciplines, benefits in part from the state's continuing financial largesse in underwriting research monograph publications.

To examine whether Canadian human geographers have changed their practices of publishing books, let me draw on some data from the annual *Canadian Association of Geographer's Directory* for 2007 (the latest), 1997, and 1987 (Barr, 1987; Rasid, 1997; Falcigno, 2007). The *Directory* provides information about geography faculty publications in all Canadian university geography departments. From each departmental listing of publications, I counted the number of books published in human geography (excluding physical geography and GIS) for each of the three years. The number of departments of geography remained relatively constant over the 20-year period (45 departments of geography in 1987 and 2007, and 47 in 1997): I did not check the total number of human geography faculty. Sixteen books were published in both 1987 and 1997, and 24 books in 2007. Obviously this is a rough and ready measure, but it gives some order of magnitude of human geography book publishing in at least this one national context. One should not draw large conclusions from such a small sample, but the figures point at least to no slacking off of monograph production; if anything, they suggest an increase. Each of the last four of my UBC human geography colleagues who went through tenure, for example, was the author of a substantive monograph, although neither I nor two others in my cohort had published books when we went through tenure 15–20 years before. Maybe David Harvey should be less worried.

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Part X: Books and individual publication strategies

The future of the book is the subject of wide debate, particularly in terms of the threats and/or opportunities presented by new digital media to its very form and the technologies of book publishing. In geography, debates about the future of the book focus more specifically on concerns about the disciplinary decline of

the monograph (Thrift, 2002; Harvey, 2006). While I agree with Thrift and Harvey about the importance and challenges of writing and publishing geographical monographs, I want to present a more positive view about their current and future place in the discipline.

Books are important in geography and other disciplines because some research lends itself to a book-length study rather than to journal articles. Books offer the scale and scope to develop an argument and draw on a wider range of material on larger and more detailed scales. This is closely tied to the wider intellectual importance of conducting long-term, sustained research, while recognizing that books are neither the only nor necessarily the best way of writing such research. The importance of the book in disciplines such as history and literary studies reflects the value placed on long-term, in-depth archival and interpretive research across the arts and humanities (Barnes, this Forum). The well-established and still relatively healthy publication of books in historical and cultural geography reflects their importance in fields of work most closely tied to the arts and humanities. If to a lesser extent, books are also important in publishing large-scale and in-depth geographical research within the social and physical sciences (Richards, this Forum; Evans, 2008, on writing books in physical geography).

Books also have the potential to shape academic and public debate, as shown by scholarly studies of the impact of particular books, especially in the history of science and in the history of geography (Secord, 2000; Livingstone, 2003; Keighren, 2006). Books are also important in reaching different readers, both across different disciplines and beyond the academy. Seeking to reach a wider readership was one of my main motivations to write a book on Anglo-Indian women and the spatial politics of home (Blunt, 2005). I believed that community members, including the participants in my research, were more likely to read a book rather than a series of journal articles, and I tried to write the book

with this wider readership in mind. I knew from the start of my research I wanted to write a book for several reasons: the time period of my study spanned the 50 years before and after Indian Independence, its geographical scope encompassed research in India, Britain and Australia, and its methodology involved archival research alongside interviews and focus groups. Writing a book enabled me to analyse historical and contemporary material across these large spatial and temporal scales alongside each other rather than separately. I wanted also to write a book from my research on the Anglo-Indian community because of a lack of book-length studies not only on this community, but also on communities of mixed descent more widely.

While books are clearly important for publishing academic research and in seeking to reach a readership across disciplines and beyond the academy, it is often difficult to write and publish books. The first set of challenges involves the material conditions that enable large-scale, long-term research, the time required to write a book-length study, and the value attributed to writing a scholarly monograph. These challenges are more acute for early-career and contract researchers rather than for those in secure and more senior positions, a fact which relates to broader questions about the academic labour market (Ward, this Forum). For example, some doctoral dissertations might lend themselves more to being revised as a book rather than a series of articles, but UK hiring committees – particularly in disciplines such as geography, compared to those more fully positioned within the arts and humanities – often look more favourably on a series of articles published in high-impact journals than the attempt to publish a monograph. Finally, another difficulty in writing and publishing books lies in the market and commercial imperatives of academic publishing, and the increasing tendency for many publishers to favour textbooks rather than monographs (McDowell, this Forum; Richards, this Forum).

Responses to these challenges to the future of book publishing in the discipline have been creative and positive: discussions at conferences (including the panel at the Annual Conference of the RGS-IBG in 2007) and this Forum raise issues for debate as well as practical advice on writing and publishing books. The establishment of several recent book series in geography provide important channels for publishing scholarly monographs, including the *Antipode* and RGS-IBG book series published by Wiley-Blackwell²² and the Tauris Historical Geography Series. Other responses include supporting colleagues as they write monographs, reading and reviewing books, and encouraging students to read books and browse in libraries rather than relying solely on articles in electronic journals. Books should be as widely promoted and celebrated as possible, whether at conferences (including the social event organized by Geographical Perspectives on Women at the Annual Meeting of the AAG, which celebrates recently published books by women) or within our own institutions.

Despite concerns about its decline, the book remains healthy in particular parts of the discipline, especially in historical and cultural geography. Debates about the future of the book in geography resonate with wider debates about different traditions of geographical thought, about valuing different intellectual cultures, and, more specifically, about the relationships between geography and the humanities. The future of the book in geography depends on fostering an intellectual culture which values long-term, sustained research, provides time for thought, reflection, reading and writing, and values different kinds of geographical knowledge.

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Part XI: Why write books?

Of all the pleasures in the academic life, putting the last few words to the final chapter

of a book is perhaps only outweighed by the look and feel of the book when it is finally published. But why, in the neoliberal audit culture in which in the UK we now work, when an 8000-word paper 'counts' for the same as a 100,000-word monograph in the latest RAE submission, does anyone still bother?

There are a number of reasons behind the radical transformation since the 1980s in scholarly publishing in the social sciences and the humanities. The first is growing concentration. As in many industries, publishing has become increasingly concentrated in a small number of international companies that dominate the market. This is perhaps less obvious in academic publishing than in the general market because of the importance of the university presses, although their position has never been as strong in the UK as in the USA. But increasingly the large publishers are interested in the volume of sales, preferring to commission textbooks and collections of readings rather than a single scholarly monograph. Connected to this concentration of ownership there has been the spatial extension of markets. Publishers now look to achieve sales across the world and so prefer comparative texts with wide market appeal. A typical response to a book about, say, London, is to be asked whether New York and Beijing might be included too. This is nothing new for human geographers who work on cities in the global south, who have perhaps become used to being asked to make comparisons with western cities (Robinson, 2006).

This concentration and globalization is reflected in the dominance of English as the preferred language – clearly an advantage for the Anglo-American academic. Finally, new technologies have transformed the whole business of writing, submitting a text, the publishing process and marketing. This has both advantages and disadvantages for the academic author. John Thompson, a sociologist at Cambridge University and co-founder of Polity Press, has argued that the changes the publishing industry is going through at

present are 'probably as profound as anything it has experienced since Johann Gutenberg adapted the traditional screw press for the purposes of manufacturing printed texts' (Thompson, 2005a: 7).

Despite Thompson's rather apocalyptic claim, the scholarly text, the single-authored monograph, still looks much as it might have done in the centuries between Gutenberg's invention and the present day. The book retains its status as the 'gold standard' of achievement – often essential for tenure, helpful in promotion (for geographers the part of the discipline in which a putative author works and the location of the department in a faculty has an influence on the significance) and a mark of a 'serious' academic. But do all social scientists (still) write books? A comparison of the submissions by different departments at Oxford University to the RAE in 2007 shows a varied pattern. Of all the 'outputs', books accounted for the following percentages: 24% in Law; 18% in Politics, 17% in both Anthropology and Archaeology; 15% in Sociology; and a mere 10% in Geography. Only in Economics and Psychology (the disciplines closest to the 'hard' sciences) were the percentages lower (a tiny 1.4% in Economics and an insignificant 0.8% in Psychology). There is little reason to think that the Oxford geographers are atypical, so why do I still write books? Indeed, why does/should anyone?

Rather than speaking for the discipline as a whole, I want briefly to suggest two personal reasons why I continue to write at book length: one pedagogic, the other scholarly, if this is an acceptable distinction. I strongly believe that teaching and research are each essential parts of the other. I write for a student audience the sorts of books that might be useful for teaching, for extending knowledge in a particular area of the discipline. These books are situated in my own research and teaching and draw on a range of other works. To a large extent, in recent years, this sort of writing has been an extension of my earlier career at the Open University when

course texts were a key method of teaching students at a distance. It is also important, as the university sector moves towards a mass system, one unfortunately associated with cuts in library (and other) budgets, that these sorts of books are readily available. I remain convinced of the value of book-length, extended treatment of a significant research issue. The length of a book allows synthesis, reflection and expansion of ideas that may have already been published as articles. But producing such a text takes time, which is sometimes a disadvantage in a discipline that seems more prone than most to fluctuating passions, to rapid movements between different theoretical frameworks and, under some of the different audit systems we have been subjected to over the last decades, to a heroic commitment to quantity rather than quality.

So why bother? My motives, as I am sure most people's are too, are mixed. A range of personal reasons, in combination with my general beliefs outlined above, keep me writing. I am the daughter of a working-class mother who became a library assistant. Books were the mark of value as I grew up. I am a hoarder – I have never knowingly thrown a book away and hope that someone somewhere feels the same about my books. I want(ed) to be a novelist or an anthropologist; if I could write a novel featuring a feminist detective I would be a happy woman, but an anthropological monograph comes a close second in my dream life. I love libraries as places of escape when I am feeling anti-social – no phones, no email, no need to talk to anyone. I love the size, shape, feel and smell of books. Perhaps above all, though, holding that book in my hand with my name on the front makes up for all those school years when – as the fizzy-haired, spec-y, uncoordinated, 'last to be chosen for the sports team' sort of girl – I felt as if I would never be good at anything that mattered.

So let's celebrate the book and extend its form – not only monographs but the ebooks, blogs, photos, diaries, data and provisional

research results that technological changes make ever more accessible. And let's encourage geographers to write more books and monographs in whatever form, not only by writing ourselves but by generously reviewing the work of others, by joining the editorial boards of monograph series, by encouraging publishers to continue to support monographs and book series, by mechanisms such as cross subsidies from journals which are profitable (in part since we academics provide so much cheap/free labour) to book series that are often less so. And perhaps, like John Thompson, some entrepreneurial geographer might yet found a press!

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Notes

1. Two previous reports were unpublished. For more details, see Johnston (2009).
2. My impressionistic view is that books would decline even further as a percentage of the total if such an exercise was undertaken.
3. No library checking was done. I relied entirely on my own judgement from the authors/titles and, in a majority of cases, knowledge of the book even if I had not read it – fortunately relatively few of the books listed were in physical geography!
4. See HEFCE, 2007: *Research excellence framework: consultation on the assessment and funding of higher education research post-2008*. Retrieved 18 November 2008, with supporting research papers, from http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2007/07_34
5. Retrieved 18 November 2008 from <http://wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=monograph>
6. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monograph>. This has subsequently changed and reads as follows (retrieved 3 December 2008): 'A monograph ... is a work of writing upon a single subject, usually also by a single author. It is often a scholarly essay or learned treatise, and may be released in the manner of a book, journal article, editorial or written rant. It is by definition a single document that forms a complete text in itself. An author may therefore declare their own work to be a monograph by intent, or a reader or critic might define a given text as a monograph for the purpose of analysis.'
7. Retrieved 18 November 2008 from <http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/publications/papers/Guidelines.doc>
8. For example, in bibliometric analyses (van Raan *et al.*, 2007), it has been shown that for a sample of subject areas the proportion of zero-cited articles lies between 29% and 57%, and for UK science as a whole the proportion is around 50%. This is not quite the same as not being read at all, but it certainly seems to be a measure of the relatively low impact of most journal articles!
9. Significant UK exceptions in terms of quality design are Reaktion, Verso and Thames and Hudson, although these publishers are rarely used by geographers.
10. Retrieved 18 November 2008 from http://www.nauka.gov.pl/_gAllery/15/84/15844/doplacowek.pdf
11. The system is much more hierarchical (if not feudal!) in Poland than in the UK. It is basically modelled on the historical German system, although as far as I know it does not exist in Germany any more. The obligatory publication of a 'habilitation dissertation' is similar to the relevant obligatory publishing of PhD theses in Scandinavian countries, for example in Sweden or Finland. They do not have a second (higher) degree above PhD, something which is in line with the Anglo-American model. For more details, see Taylor (1985).
12. Retrieved 18 November 2008 from http://oldwww.ru.ac.za/research/publications/isi_master_journal_list.htm
13. The Andes-Amazon is considered here as an 'area', while the concept of 'region' will be used in reference to the identity of the imaginary zoning within the area and within its countries (eg, the 'Oriente' in Ecuador or the 'Andes' in Venezuela).
14. Such is the case with France's IFEA (Institut Français d'études Andines) and IRD (Institut de recherche pour le développement), Germany's GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit) or UNDP (United Nations Development Programme).
15. Retrieved 18 November 2008 from http://en.thinkexist.com/quotation/this_book_fills_a_much-needed_gap/214889.html
16. Retrieved 18 November 2008 from http://mqp.mcgill.ca/book_list.php
17. Retrieved 18 November 2008 from <http://www.utppublishing.com/pubstore/merchant.ihtml>
18. Retrieved 18 November 2008 from <http://www.ubcpres.com/books/pdf/catalogues/Environment2007.pdf> and <http://www.ubcpres.com/books/pdf/catalogues/Planning2007.pdf>
19. Retrieved 18 November 2008 from <http://www.oup.com/ca>
20. Retrieved 18 November 2008 from <http://www.fedcan.ca/english/aspp/about/>
21. Retrieved 18 November 2008 from http://www.sshrc.ca/web/about/publications/aspp_evaluation_part1_final_e.pdf
22. Both these series are managed by the publications rather than the book section at Wiley-Blackwell. Both series were established as part of wider deals with journals – *Antipode* in one case; *Area*, the *Geographical Journal* and the *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* in the other. As such, both series can commission research monographs on the basis of academic quality rather than potential sales.

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