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Bet You Missed It--What do bookstores and rabbit hunters have in common?

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Editor's Note: Hey, are y'all reading this? If you know of an article that should be called to *Against the Grain's* attention ... send an email to <kstrauch@comcast.net>. We're listening! — **KS**

BOOKSTORE ON SANTORINI by Bruce Strauch (Retired, The Citadel)

Unbelievable. In 2002, a pair of college juniors got the wild idea of opening an independent bookstore on the Greek island of Santorini. They did it, and it's still alive. It sits on a promontory below a crumbling Venetian castle.

Atlantis Books is an island institution and known world-wide. You can crash there if you work in the store. The model is **Shakespeare and Co.** on the Rue Dauphine in Paris.

Of course it wasn't easily done. The number of owners expanded to four including a girl who later married one. There was layers of Greek bureaucracy, in-fighting and prat-falls. And of course it didn't turn a profit.

Then they hit upon the idea of small postcard sized booklet reprints of famous short stories, and **Paravion Press** was born. It was an artisanal hit with tourists.

Now everyone is 35 and wondering whither **Atlantis Books**.

See — **David Kamp**, "The Accidental Bookshop," *Vanity Fair*, Dec. 2016, p.112.

YOU'VE READ THE BOOK; NOW MEET THE AUTHOR by Bruce Strauch (Retired, The Citadel)

Goodnight Moon was published in 1947 and has been adored ever since. 14 million copies sold. The wild author, on the other hand, is forgotten.

Margaret Wise Brown was a bi-sexual beauty who never married, a rabbit hunter who penned *The Runaway Bunny*, and a prolific writer who changed the face of modern picture books.

Amy Grant has a new biography of her — *In the Great Green Room*. **Margaret** was born rich, and as typical of the times, ignored by her parents. Boarding schools, **Hollins College**, Great Neck, Maine summer house. Later Upper East Side of New York with her lady lover. She wanted to be a serious author but her talent was children's books. But she didn't like children.

But she could write. *The Runaway Bunny* she composed while skiing and wrote it down on her ski receipt. Her normal preference was a quill pen.

See — **Susannah Cahalan**, "*Goodnight Moon* author was a bisexual rebel who didn't like kids," *The New York Post*, Jan. 7, 2017, n.p.



The Value of Publishing ... from page 8

this as a mark of quality. For which titles is the "art" of publishing in fact a business necessity? In which cases might it be less important?

- One possible first step is a close assessment of where a press' costs lie today. My colleague **Kim Schmelzinger** and I developed a Monograph Costing Tool³ for the **AAUP** that permits publishers to study a group of already-published titles, by examining staff time, direct costs and overheads.
- For those publishers just getting started and considering OA models, it will be worth considering which of the values of the full publishing acquisitions — development — production — design — promotion — distribution cycle are worth maintaining and investing in. Some may seem to be "sales-related" but also have deep mission-based value. Which ones will help advance the ultimate aim of creating new works of scholarship? Which will insure that those works of scholarship are of highest quality, are well-produced,

and are found and enjoyed by the readers who need them?

- Publishers will want to define for themselves which books will be better served via an OA-subsidy model, and which they prefer to develop and sell. An obvious way would be to determine which titles are the ones that will ultimately cost more than they generate. Deciding this is notoriously difficult. (Publisher: "About half my books break even or better; the other half lose money." Critic: "Why not only publish the half that sell?" Rimshot.) Scholarly books have a notoriously slow fuse. Some may take a few seasons to start to catch on, perhaps as course adoption titles. Those that do may continue to sell well for years. None of this may be at all obvious at the start. Still, it may be necessary to define a type of book for which a quick and efficient distribution method is valuable, and perhaps sufficient. For titles a publisher sees as diamonds in the rough, and sees the potential in a deeper investment, they may choose a different path.

The next few years will be a fascinating time, as publishers of all types wrestle with the tensions of sharing scholarship as broadly

as possible, while still retaining the high qualities that authors and their readers appreciate. The essays in this collection highlight just a few of the values that publishing activities and their practitioners offer to the scholarly lifecycle. As scholars, publishers, librarians and all others in the scholarly communications chain continue to experiment with new formats, new business models, and new organizational structures, coming back to a discussion of the value of the various activities that together constitute "publishing" may be a good way to avoid decisions that are made based on spreadsheets alone. 🐼

Endnotes

1. **Maron** et al, "The Costs of Publishing Monographs: Toward a Transparent Methodology," *Journal of Electronic Publishing*, Volume 19, Issue 1: Economics of Publishing, Summer 2016), doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/3336451.0019.103>.
2. **Mick Gusinde-Duffy**, "Why Peer Review is the Worst Form of Quality Control and Credentialing Except All Those Other Forms that Have Been Tried From Time to Time," *Against the Grain*, v.28#4, September 2016, page 75.
3. **Maron** and **Schmelzinger**, "Monograph Costing Tool" (AAUP, 2016). <http://www.aaupnet.org/resources/for-members/hand-books-and-toolkits/digital-monograph-costing-tool>