Artists’ Books
Creative Production
and Marketing

Sarah Bodman
Impact Press
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**Artists’ Books Creative Production and Marketing**

Our AHRC supported survey project has resulted in the publication of this guide for book artists, particularly those who have little experience of marketing their work.

We asked both established and new artists to tell us about any issues concerning the production and marketing their artists’ books. This helped to establish a picture of the current situation, so we could try to address some of the problems experienced by book artists.

As there are now many artists making books, the subject has grown in related disciplines in the fine, applied and graphic arts fields. Stefan Szczelkun’s *UK Artists Books: Marketing and Promotion* Estamp, London, 1993 and Simon Ford’s *Artists’ Books in UK and Eire Libraries* Estamp, London, 1992, were two useful studies published on the marketing and promotion of the artist's book in the UK. With the increased amount of study, interest in, and production of artists’ books over recent years, we hope the results of this contemporary survey will help to identify opportunities and strategies for new book artists to market their work and establish connections with both private collectors and purchasing institutions.

This guide has been compiled for the book artist - assuming their role is that of creative producer, publisher and distributor of their own artwork; to discuss and hopefully resolve some of the practical issues arising from this. There is a more direct link between the artist and the buyer in the field of artists’ books than any other art discipline. Many book artists are unsure of the market potential of their work and this is particularly difficult in their situation as they are usually directly responsible for interacting with the purchaser.

The survey compared methods used by book artists for producing and distributing their work, and the importance of artist’s book fairs and events for building relationships with purchasers and with other artists.

The following guide has been compiled from the data collected from a range of sources including: our survey forms, which were distributed at book fairs, through our mailing list and downloadable via a link on our website. Respondents ranged from well established to newer artists, and a range of curators, collectors (both institutional and private) bookshops, dealers, galleries, lecturers and instructors.

We also interviewed 24 book artists to present a series of case studies of artists’ experiences in the UK, EIRE, France, Germany, Spain, Denmark and the USA, which can be used as reference guides for newer artists and students wanting to find out more about producing and marketing their artists’ books. We selected a range of artists with 2 – 30+ years experience of making and marketing artists’ books, zines, editions and unique books and asked them to share their working practices and experiences of book fairs, interaction with collections and purchasers, and any problems or advice.

We also asked collectors to tell us about the ways in which they would prefer to interact with artists selling their books and any issues arising from collecting artists’ books.

Tom Sowden and I surveyed exhibitors and purchasers at the following artist's book fairs in order to establish the existing position of the market and the market audience: Small Publishers’ Fair, Conway Hall, London Pyramid Atlantic Artist’s Book Fair and Conference, Washington, USA London Artist’s Book Fair (LAB 04), ICA, London 8th Contemporary Artist’s Book Fair, Dean Clough Galleries, Halifax 2nd International Artist’s Book Fair, COEX Hall, Seoul, Republic of Korea.

Attending these events allowed us to survey a range of artists and collectors from the following countries: UK, EIRE, France, Russia, Republic of Korea, Canada, Germany, Italy, Norway, Denmark, New Zealand, Japan, The Netherlands, South Africa and the USA. The difference in artists’ experiences from these countries has provided an extra dimension to the survey, which we hope will make the final documentation of interest to a wider field.

We have also included a list of collections, book fairs, places to see, buy and sell artists’ books, some reference reading and websites which should help artists to find out more about available opportunities, marketing ideas and supporting networks.

We are very grateful to all the people who responded to the survey, with particular thanks to the case study artists, who gave their time and allowed us to share their knowledge with other artists. Please note that in the main texts, numbers before a response quote, i.e. (6) indicate the survey question number, from the preceding text. Please note that text in [square brackets] in quotes or case studies, indicates the editor’s notes. This guide will be updated in the future. If you would like to share any of your information with other book artists in the future reprint, then please contact us.

Sarah Bodman
Four generations and Mac the dog enjoy perusing artists' books
Photo: Tom Sowden
Establishing a relationship between artist and purchaser of artists’ books

Purchasers of artists’ books

As part of the survey, we asked collectors to tell us:

6. Who (or what) is your main source for purchasing artists’ books for your collection?

Both institutional and private collectors make a substantial amount of purchasing through artist’s book fairs, dealers, collectives and specialist bookshops. They also deal with artists directly, if a proper appointment to visit has been arranged.

Responses from some of the collectors who gave permission to quote:

(6) Specific bookstores and private artist’s book dealers, independent artist’s book publishers, artists coming through or mailing in their work [after initial contact was made] or if I have seen the work reviewed (Art on Paper, Art Monthly, Umbrella, etc.), fairs.
Anne Dorothee Boehme, curator, Joan Flasch Artist’s Book Collection, School of the Art Institute, Chicago

(6) Artist’s book fairs, bookartbookshop and Eagle Gallery. Neil Crawford, collector, UK

(6) London Artist’s Book Fair, from WSA staff and students, and specialist bookshops. Catherine Polley, curator, Winchester School of Art Library, UK

(6) From art fairs, private studios and galleries. Doug Beube, collector, USA

(6) artist’s book fairs, bookshops and book fairs, specialist catalogues. Philip Ward, collector, UK

(6) Internet, Pyramid Atlantic book fair in Washington, D.C., Printed Matter and Center for Book Arts (both in New York City), Oak Knoll book fair (private press). Michael Brooks, collector, USA

Collections and Collectors

"The biggest problem for book artists selling their work is how do you know who will buy it? I sell almost all of my work to USA university libraries. I approach named special collection librarians when I am teaching there and arrange an appointment to show them my work. I have never left a university without selling my work in this way. In the States, the book arts are considerably more popular and better organised than in the UK.

There must be thousands of public and private collectors there – I am building a list of who they are." Paul Johnson, The Book Art Project, UK/USA

Artists are sometimes unsure of how to approach a collection or potential collector. You don’t have to meet them either, many of the curators were happy to discuss the work, after initial contact, and view it either personally or sent on approval (not unsolicited). Most of them were just as happy to buy through dealers or bookshops which they found efficient when they knew about the works they were selling.

If you don’t market your work through artist’s book fairs, dealers and outlets, which are often where collectors will make a substantial amount of their purchases, then approaching a collection yourself is the only option. If you don’t want to approach a collection on your own, then see if other artists who make similar work, will join together as a small group, you can then make marketing arrangements between you and appoint representatives for the whole group.

Acquisition policies

Collectors do often have an acquisitions policy but these are not always readily available, however, many collections are open to artworks which do not fit into their given criteria, the majority of curators stated that they would consider most types of artists’ books. Many institutional collections will concentrate on purchasing books which relate to their teaching curriculum.

An example of policies in the UK: Tate Library and Archive has an online record of books in the collection, so you can browse and see the type of things they collect, mostly larger editions and more inexpensive books. Tate has a written acquisitions policy and price limits. (www.tate.org.uk/research/researchservices/library/artistsbooks.htm).

Meg Duff responds to the question of how artists can find out about the acquisitions policy "I usually tell them in an initial phone conversation, and, in response to emails I usually attach a copy as a one-page Word document, whether this is requested or not."

In the USA: Joan Flasch Artist’s Book Collection, School of the Art Institute, Chicago. "We collect books and multiples mostly in the $10 - to $200 - range; rarely do we buy an item that is more expensive than that. Any printing technique, any format, any topic, any edition size (although one-of-a-kind items usually don’t fall into this price category). My main guidance is found in our curricular activities and potential user
interests. Both change over time. We do not usually buy broadsides or posters, artists’ audio or video works unless they are accompanied by a book work, artists’ stamps and other ephemera, nor do we buy examples of bookbinding, papermaking, etc.” Anne Dorothee Boehme, curator, Joan Flasch Artist’s Book Collection, School of the Art Institute, Chicago.

**Approaching collections**

As part of the survey, we asked both institutional and private collectors:

1. **How would you prefer to be approached by an artist wishing to sell their work to you?**

2. **In your opinion, what would be the worst way of approaching you?**

**Institutional Collections**

There have been varying responses to this question; which have ranged enough in opinion for us to say that there is no definitive set of rules for approaching collections or collectors. The main differences are in the preferred means of approach, some curators favour an initial phone call request to set up a meeting (as they know that letters and brochures can get buried under paperwork) but some have said that constant phone interruptions are the last thing they want when they are trying to work. All the curators who responded said that a personal appearance without an appointment is not the way to approach any collection. If you are not sure about a collection’s acquisition policies or interests, look them up on the internet, then write or email for information, many collections have a sheet which they can send to artists before they submit or offer any work for consideration.

Some of the responses about approaching collections:

1. By phone call, email or letter. If the artist intends to bring the work in personally, there needs to be enough time to set up an appointment. (2) By turning up, unannounced, with the work. By sending unsolicited work on approval, especially in the case of an artist unknown to me. Meg Duff, curator, Tate Britain Library, UK

1. By email or tel. We can arrange visits or, at an artist’s book fair (2) Unsolicited personal appearance at work, our diaries are too full. Linda Newington, curator, Winchester School of Art Library, UK

What artists marketing their work need to appreciate is that many curators and institutional collectors have plenty of work to do, and cannot be expected to respond to artists immediately, or to drop everything because we want to sell them our books! There are a lot more artists than there are curators.

It is also worthwhile remembering that institutions have a budgetary year the same as any business does, so they may not be able to buy your work because they have already allocated the financial year’s budget, which can vary from April – April for State collections and Autumn – June for educational collections. So don’t be disappointed if they don’t have the money to purchase, even if they like your work. Ask when would be a good time to approach them again, or see if they would like you to set a copy aside and get back to them when their next spending budget is available.

“There are times during the year where I simply have spent my budget and can’t buy anything. Or where I am so busy with other projects that I have to put acquisitions on hold for a while. Generally the best time for me is late summer/early fall, since our fiscal year starts in July.” Anne Dorothee Boehme, Joan Flasch Artist’s Book Collection, School of the Art Institute, Chicago

Overall, it seems that the most polite method of contact would be an initial letter, or email which are both less obtrusive, followed by a call if there has been no response after a few weeks. However, the more you can find out about a collection before you contact them the better. Make sure that approaches are to the right collection, department and person before you begin; otherwise it is a waste of both your and their time and resources. Many collections have a good internet presence, with information on their specialisms and contact addresses, it pays to do the background research before you approach a collection, they will be more interested if you know about the type of works they collect.

**Some reasons for rejection, which we publish here with anonymity:**

Unique works that are very expensive, especially when made with materials with obvious preservation concerns.

Shoddy construction and materials that will obviously cause problems.

Items that need specific housing conditions, that are too fragile for our open access policies.

Items that make use of toxic materials, that are in the process of decaying, or are
extremely oversized might not be considered either.

If we already have a sufficient number of items of the same (or similar) concept or technique I might not buy the work, even if in itself it is a very successful example of book art.

Our annual budget has been allocated to its limit for the year.

**Private Collectors**

Approaching a private collector is obviously a more sensitive issue than an institution. All of the respondents to this survey said that the last thing they would want is someone turning up unannounced on their doorstep. Private collectors however, are often very happy to meet the artists at book fairs and events because they like to know about the work and the maker. One thing that private collectors also seem to want, is documentation and further contact.

Neil Crawford is a private collector of artists’ books, whose main sources of purchasing are artist’s book fairs, bookartbookshop, London and Eagle Gallery, London. He regularly attends artist’s book fairs and exhibitions to purchase work for his collection, which includes: “minimalism, typography, land/environment response and wit/wit/knowing humour.” (see Crawford’s essay on collecting in the 7th Halifax Contemporary Artist’s Book Fair catalogue). He enjoys meeting the artist wherever possible, and is happy for artists to approach him and talk to him about their work at book fairs and events when he is free. “I buy largely on aesthetic/gut reaction. Therefore, I am delighted to learn anything more about the work itself and of the artist’s aims/intentions. Given that I haunt degree shows and bookart fairs, I’d really appreciate that my interest in a particular artist’s bookwork generated a positive response from the artist when the shows are over. In the past, contact has been made and interest has been expressed only to peter out on the artist’s part after a few emails.”

Wilf Welburn, a collector in New Zealand has no specific theme to his collection, he just enjoys artists’ books for themselves and will buy them because he likes them. He appreciates information on books and the artists by “any way that is not intrusive – mail or email. I would like to be kept informed of new or future work that is being produced without feeling I’m being pressured to buy. The fact is, that living where I do (New Zealand), I’m not likely to be approached in any other way. I find the Artist’s Book Yearbook a useful resource.

Apart from that I find out about books from other books, from catalogues, magazines and the internet. Ideally I would like to browse through artists’ books in the same way that I can browse through mass-produced books in a bookshop.”

“It is nice to get documentation from an artist after one has purchased their work, e.g. exhibition catalogues of shows they have participated in.” Jack M. Ginsberg, South Africa

Please also see Case Study 1, Philip Ward, private collector, p.10

**Supplying information to collectors and purchasers**

As part of the survey, we asked both private and institutional collectors:

(7) Do you have any issues arising from cataloguing or archiving artists’ books you have purchased? If so, is there any information from the artist that would make your job easier? (for example, if the artist provided an information sheet for you).

The majority of buyers, both institutional and private, would like to receive some documentation on the artist’s book they purchase, preferably an information sheet with details of the book’s edition and the artist’s contact details. This is useful for collections to keep a record of the artist as well as helping them archive the work. Making an information sheet also means that curators have your details on file, which can be an opportunity for you; if they plan future exhibitions of work from their collections, they can contact you with the venue, dates, catalogue etc. Ian Tyson made a useful application form for the *British Artist’s Books 1983-1993* exhibition, which was reproduced in Stefan Szczelkun’s *UK Artists’ Books Marketing and Promotion* (1993, p22, appendix VIII).

For a copy of the guide form I use for my own artists’ books information and we also use for artists to submit information for our publications, see figure 1, p.12. This can be used or adapted as a template for information on editions, to be supplied with a book on purchase.

Many of the collectors we surveyed, commented on the importance of information sheets; some institutions supply their own forms for artists to fill in when selling work to them, e.g. Joan Flasch Collection, School of the Art Institute, Chicago and Long Island University collections, USA.
CASE STUDY 1: Collector, private

Philip Ward, Cambridge UK

Philip Ward is a publisher, travel writer, novelist, poet, and artist. He makes one-off artworks of collages and drawings, which he sees as running parallel with his public writing, and which are also used in published works. He publishes the worldwide directory *Contemporary Designer Bookbinders*. He is passionate about the importance of artist’s book fairs and visits them regularly on top of the fairs he attends as a publisher.

He has a large collection of books, all catalogued by card and arranged by artist, author or composer. His collection is “universal and driven by an insane desire to know and love everything.”

He prefers to be approached by letter with supporting catalogue or brochure. The worst approach for him would be appearing on his doorstep whilst he is working. Ward is happy to meet the artist if possible but does not feel that it is necessary.

His main sources for purchasing works are specialist artist’s book fairs, bookshops and book fairs; he also buys works via specialist catalogues.

He would be very happy if each artist he buys from would also supply him with A4 information sheets headed with their name. He also takes photos of many of the artists he deals with, and feels that this is an important part of documenting the whole field.

Philip Ward would like to see annual exhibitions of artists’ books in the UK sponsored by the Arts Council and regional arts councils. These should be tied in with events, as the Small Press Fair in Mainz is tied in with the Frankfurt Bookfair.
Some of the responses to question 7:

(7) As the books go into a library collection, the following information is considered essential for our records (in order of importance): name of artist; title of book; date of publication; place of publication; publisher. If these details don’t appear on the book itself it would be very useful to have them on a separate sheet. Information sheets are generally very desirable; it is good to know about the artist’s intentions, the processes and techniques used, and anything else which may illuminate the work. Meg Duff, curator, Library and Archive, Tate Britain, London, UK

(7) Information sheets are always useful. Catherine Polley, curator, Winchester School of Art Library, UK

(7) Ideally I’d like an artist’s statement covering each purchase I make. When buying directly from the artist, this can sometimes be made. When buying from dealers/galleries this is not always so easy. Neil Crawford, private collector, UK.

(7) An information sheet would be so helpful. Preferably one that hits all the major components of a bibliographic record: author(s)/artist(s); official title; place of publication; publisher; date of publication; materials; subject. This would also be very helpful in that it can take a long time for the materials to be catalogued as they often require original cataloguing. In the meantime, they are represented in the library’s online catalog with a “preliminary record” which our support staff puts together from what they can glean from the book. An information sheet would allow us to create an improved preliminary record and thus improve access to the materials while they are waiting for full cataloging. Jae Jennifer Rossman, Special Collections Librarian & Curator, Arts of the Book Collection, Arts Library, Yale University, USA

(7) I would be interested in an information sheet if one were available. Michael Brooks, private collector, USA

(7) Slides and a brief description of the work is necessary. Doug Beube, private collector and artist, USA

(7) I also like to know about the methods of production used. Of course you can see most of it just by looking at the book. But any additional description about the processes used would be welcome. Wilf Welburn, private collector, New Zealand

(7) I like to have as much detail on the artist and the work as possible. I find difficulty with untitled works (but this happens only seldom). I like to have confirmation of the graphic medium used as this is sometimes difficult to determine. I hate it when an artist does not sign their work!
Jack M. Ginsberg, private collector, South Africa

Approaching bookshops and dealers

The strategies for this are similar to those for approaching collections. Do your homework first to see if your work will be within their range of subject matter and price range. Many dealers have websites with images and information of the type of works they deal with (see the websites list). Contact them and make an appointment to visit or submit work, don’t just turn up and expect them to have time to look at your work and don’t send items in the post unless they have agreed to this; unsolicited books will probably not find their way back to you.

Be professional; have information, contact details, samples and price lists to hand, and make sure you know the amount of books you have available for stock if they want them.

An approach as part of a group through a nominated salesperson or two can be advantageous; between you, you can offer a wider range of works for the bookshop or dealer to select from. Larger bookstores will usually order from large and established book suppliers who will expect a substantial discount on the retail price. They may also only deal with books that have an ISBN (see the following section on applying an ISBN to your book for more information on this).

Concentrating on small and specialist suppliers or dealers can be much more rewarding, you will usually only be dealing with one person rather than a large organisation, and small and independent bookshops and dealers have a greater personal interest in the types of books they sell. Always bear in mind that bookshops (like any other business) will expect to be supplied on a set period, sale-or-return basis only, will take around 30-50% of the retail price, can sometimes take months to pay for sales, and will expect a display copy for handling. This is not going to be viable if you only have a small edition of books for sale.

Please also see Case Study 2, Tanya Peixoto, bookartbookshop, p.14

Dealers also usually require some images and information before they consider viewing the work, and may have preferences for more expensive works (if they have to make their living selling artists’ books, they will need to sell works that bring a decent profit). They
may also have clauses where they ask you not to sell through other dealers, or not to approach the collections they deal with, so tying yourself to one dealer may not always be beneficial if you also want to market the work yourself. Most artist's book dealers are in business because they love the books and have built up good relationships with artists and collectors over a period of time, but ask other artists for any recommendations and don’t leave your books with someone if you are not sure how they operate and how to reach them for any returns or payment.

Please see the list of places to see, buy and sell artists’ books on page 23.

Is it useful to give your artist's book an ISBN?


ISBN’s are useful only for commercial artist’s book sales of larger editions, which enable you to be identified and contacted for ordering purposes, as the publisher of the book for distribution and sales.

Applying an ISBN to your artist’s book is only worth it if you intend to distribute it through commercial bookshops and galleries, and if it is an edition of a minimum of 50 (100+ is more appropriate).

You can purchase ISBNs as a publisher (give yourself an imprint name) in blocks of 10 or more. Each ISBN is a code, which identifies: the publisher, type of book, title and check digit.

Larger bookstores and outlets can order books via distributors who contact you with the order. Selling your work through large distributors can incur them asking for hefty discounts, they also take up to 6-8 weeks to pay the invoices.

A few reasons why ISBNs are not suitable for smaller editions:

The costs - The UK publishers’ registration fee is currently £77.50 (July 2005) plus a block of 10 ISBN’s is £67.50.

Legal deposit claims - (British Library etc.) you could lose up to 6 copies of the edition – unpaid.

If you are distributing a small edition yourself or selling mainly at book fairs, you don’t need to be identified by a large distribution company.

Some advice from Danny Flynn, (Research Associate, Middlesex University) who uses an ISBN for any of his editions of 100+:

“Filling in the Whitaker information form to assign an ISBN triggers a request from The British Library for a legal deposit copy, followed by a further 5 copies requested for Oxford, Cambridge, Scotland, Dublin and Wales. In accordance with the provision of section 15 of the copyright act 1911. This is a legal requirement if you are making your book available for sale in this country.

I understand a lot of artists don’t want to give away six copies of their publications and therefore lose out on listings etc, as a result.

Book Data supply Waterstone's with book lists and you have to be on this list to supply Waterstone's. I have always updated my details with them. As a result I've continued to sell one particular booklet via mail order from various bookshops directly. I also send samples of each of my artists' books to Artbibliographies Modern to list and review. I don't know if that has sold any though.”
CASE STUDY 2: Bookshop dealing in artists’ books

Tanya Peixoto, bookartbookshop, Pitfield Street, London, UK
www.bookartbookshop.com

Tanya Peixoto (former publishing editor of the Artist’s Book Yearbook and Magpie Press) established bookartbookshop in 2001. It carries a comprehensive range of artists’ publications and has regular exhibitions, launches and events promoting artists’ books.

bookartbookshop has a policy of stocking artists’ publications from editions of 100+, exceptions are made to offer a good cross-section of current production in the field.

Approaching bookartbookshop: artists and publishers are provided with a printed sheet detailing policies, on request, and can then contact bookartbookshop to make an appointment to visit the bookshop with their work. Artists and publishers are advised not to send books through the post as “the post is unreliable and books go in a pile waiting to be looked at and/or sent back which is expensive.”

Tanya Peixoto prefers to meet the artists as it helps when selling their books to customers. Some examples of sources for stock are: Atlas Press, Andrew Lanyon, Les Coleman, Weproductions, Morning Star, Mermaid Turbulence and Nazraeli Press.

“I want publishers who have a body of work and titles to sell, I don’t want to take an individual title from an artist who only makes one book - as it is too much administration work for one book. I would like new and up-to-the-minute books brought to bookartbookshop; exciting new work by artists who are committed to producing many books.”
Pricing your work

This is the inevitable ‘how long is a piece of string?’ question. There are so many factors involved in working out a price for artists’ books. The main differences are between those who factor their time into the total cost and those who don’t. Many artists feel that including the cost of preparation time would price the work out of all proportion. Is it more important to make a decent profit or get your work out? Setting your price will depend upon how you feel about this.

Some of the artists surveyed also make unique books, and the prices of these obviously differ from larger editions. These are produced as stand-alone pieces, or as part of a larger installation. Pricing of unique books has not arisen as an issue, artists are confident in pricing items they consider as one-offs and therefore comparable to the price of a painting or sculpture.

With distribution of ideas in mind, many artists are keen to keep their editioned book prices around the same as standard book prices. For example Weproductions and John Bently. John McDowall (Bradford, UK) adds: “even though the books are handprinted and bound in small numbers, I maintain ‘book’ prices between - £15 to £60 and do not change the price once it is set.”

John Dilnot (Brighton, UK) has been making editions of artists’ books and prints for 20 years, which are his main source of income. His editions are usually around 500, and he sells them as cheaply as possible as he wants the public to buy them, as well as collectors, libraries etc. Danny Flynn’s books are made in editions of 100+ (with unique works made usually as non-selling pieces to accompany a performance of exhibiting). “As I sell the books quite cheaply, they do deplete in stock quickly and I think that the work wouldn’t enjoy so much exposure if I sold an edition of say, only ten or twenty copies. I like the idea of people buying the books for themselves because that’s exactly what I do. I buy books. Of course if the work is bought by a collection giving it the opportunity to be viewed by the public this is very good.”

Many recent graduates or new book artists are unsure of strategies for pricing their work, so here are a few basic things to consider when trying to work out a price. Overall, the factors to cost in the equation are:

Materials + cost of time spent producing the edition per hour (divided by no. of books in the edition) + a retail mark up. If you sell through bookshops, dealers and galleries, they will take up to c.40-50% of the retail price.

Try to set a price that stays the same wherever the book is. Many collectors expressed frustration at the varying prices of the same artist’s book, particularly in different countries.

Use the internet to help work it out; many artists have their own websites to sell their books, with prices for ordering by mail. Visit some to compare work, materials and pricing. Visit book fairs and see other artists’ work and prices.

99% of us pay for the costs of producing our own artists’ books, as publishing grants are few and far between. Book Works, the largest publisher of artists’ books in the UK, has a whole Fact-sheets section on its website, with lots of really useful information at www.bookworks.org.uk. Follow the links to ‘Fact-sheets’ for downloadable fact sheets on publishing, funding, marketing and distributing your books. Some organisations run residencies or publication programmes where you can apply to go and make your book in situ, and some arts councils do have small publishing grants, but the competition for these is high.

However, this isn’t really the point, it is your artwork, and you want to get it out there; if you want to make it - find a way to do it! If you can’t afford a large offset edition, make a small, digital print or photocopy one that you can print to order, the technologies available for home computing/print, make it much easier for artists to print their own books now.

To help with the costs of publishing larger editions of work, some artists offer a pre-publication price, which means cash up front to put towards editioning. “I have a pre-publication subscription scheme, where I offer subscribers about 50% discount on the eventual selling (shop) price. Depending on the type of book and its size, this differs from edition to edition.” (John Bently, artist, UK). We also do this each time we publish the Artist’s Book Yearbook, to help with the printing costs.

Helga Kos, an artist in The Netherlands has made a large hand printed edition (288) of her book Ode to the Colossal Sun. “I worked out a final price for my book in close consultation with my gallery and an artist’s book dealer. We formulated a subscription price in the very beginning of the making of the book. Subscribers would get a hefty discount on the price, if they were willing to do the complete payment beforehand. The discount became lesser in time until the book was completely finished. (The making of the book took 5 years. so the discount was 50% at first, the second year 40 % than 30% and so on). The price of the book is rather high:
1500 Euros, but the material costs and the cost for the CD, the box and the binding was extremely high as well. So the final price was set at a certain reasonable amount. Although some people still find it a large amount usually, they agree that the price is reasonable. And still it will not be enough to pay for all the hours I put into the project. But that is not the most important thing."

We asked artists the following question:

8. Have you formulated your own pricing structure for your editions? Would you be willing to write down how you work out your selling price?

Some artists were willing to share the methods they use for calculating the price of their work; I will start with my own. I cost at: cost of materials, plus actual making time (costing total time – I feel - would be unrealistic) then, enough to cover a couple getting lost or ruined (in an edition of 20, say you will lose 2 or 3 from display, accidents in public places etc.) that gives me a basic price. I then add c.40% to cover commission from any sales, as commission varies, i.e. galleries take up to 60%, but a direct order from a collection is no commission, so to keep things simple I have a set price wherever the book is, as you don’t want someone to buy it and then see it cheaper somewhere else.

Some of the artists’ responses:

(8) Most of my (unique) books are priced under $100 as that is what most people will spend for a small unique book. I have come to this realisation after many years of book fairs - when I reduce the prices the books sell fast! Elena Mary Siff, artist, USA

(8) When I have finished an edition, I think about what it would realistically sell for. When I am being very efficient, I also keep a log of the number of hours I have spent on the creation of the edition, and the cost of the materials. Inevitably, the price I think it would realistically sell for means I would be paying myself about £2 an hour! I also have to allow that one or two of the edition will have to be used as display copies and I won’t be able to sell them, so that also knocks off what I can make from a whole edition. Ideally the formula would be: My hours @ c.£10 per hour + cost of materials + a bit for running expenses, add these together, then divide by: The number of units in the edition. That gives me the price per unit but as mentioned, if you have made 20 you should probably only divide by 17 because you will have some wastage. Deb Rindl, artist, UK

(8) Because the editions I make are small and contain original prints in the main, I tend to have to set my prices at the higher end of the market. It is always a balancing act for me to try to cover costs and earn enough for the artistic content but still remain at a competitive price. My artists’ books do not earn as much as they should if one takes into account the number of images included. If I sold them as single prints I would earn a lot more from them, but I am committed to the artist’s book as a form and will continue to pursue this area while subsidising it through the sale of single images through other channels. Jane Hyslop, artist, UK

(8) I price my books by looking at the web sites of other book artists who are at similar career stages as myself to see what they charge for similar books. Then I compare that price to other books that I’ve made to see if that price is in line with the complexity and style of work. Laura Russell, artist, USA

(8) My price is worked out by six main factors, and used for all my work, unique or small editions. (1) Cost of materials (2) labour (including conceptual/design/intellectual/research time spent, and cost breakdown of collaborators or contractors) (3) Value of intellectual or aesthetic property (i.e. a new innovative form or idea is worth money) (4) Relationship of the work to your former works (is this a breakout piece, the start or end of a body of work, an aberration?) (5) Comparison to the current market price and future price trajectory of similar works by (and this is important) artists with similar career standing. This sort-of takes into account how much you think someone will actually pay for the work and the minimum you want to sell it at. (6) Personal curatorial decisions regarding how fabulous you think the work is professionally or culturally, how attached to it you are personally, and pure intuition. Marshall Weber, artist, USA

(8) When I first started making I was selling my books very, very cheaply. I was even asked by one press why I didn’t put up my prices, but I was just starting out, and I wanted to sell. I asked what I thought the market would give me in terms of price. As I went on, and made more books, went to a few fairs and saw every one else’s’ work and prices, combined with a reduced amount of available time to make and do, my prices gradually increased. My prices reflect quite simply:
A. How long or hard the book is to reproduce
B. How happy I am with the book
C. How popular the book turns out to be
D. Any developmental potential along the way
E. How soon I get sick of reproducing the book
The best way to price a tricky bit of work is to ask yourself "How much am I prepared to let this go for?" Call that your bottom-line, go no lower than that for a tricky price. For easy obvious pricing where it seems obvious or easy and often it’s heading into the less than £30 marker, depending on who’s doing the selling what the commission is etc. Try and keep it at that, after about £30 people tend to think a bit before a purchase.

Andi McGarry, artist, EIRE

(8) I have found there are several price points in the book arts market and this works for individuals as well as institutions (all my prices are in USD):
$100 and under: there is a group of people that will buy in this price range and I think $40 is a great price point if you can make something that can sell for this.
$300 and under: Individuals and institutions will buy in this range, but not so quickly.
$500 and under: $1000 and under.
$3000 and under: Anything over this price, many institutions will have to present to a committee. Many can purchase items for collections under this amount with out requiring special permission.

Miriam Schaer, artist, USA

The Role of the Artist’s Book Fair

We asked artists about their experiences of specialist fairs as a means of not only selling their work but as a valuable opportunity to meet other artists, exchange ideas and information. Artist’s book fairs constitute the main source, or a significant percentage of income for most of the book artists we surveyed. They also act as a means of focus in preparing works for a deadline. See the list of Artist’s Book Fairs on page 19.

Individual artists’ problems with book fairs are overwhelmingly: the expense as individuals, and the lack of time to view work and meet artists on other stands. The cost of a stand at a book fair can range from £50-500+ for a one – four day event, and this outlay, compounded with travel and accommodation costs can make it unviable for an individual artist. If you are there alone, it is difficult to meet others whilst looking after your stand. These issues can be overcome if artists are prepared to work together.

Quite a few artists have grouped together with others (in 2s or larger groups) who make similar work, so try and find other like-minded artists and mobilise yourselves into a collective or group. The benefits are the obvious support of working in numbers and sharing the costs of exhibiting at book fairs. If you can group together and give yourselves a press, collective or imprint name, you can then work as a recognised group to approach galleries or collections and exhibit under one name at a book fair with a nominated contact name and address for any catalogues/publicity. Working with others will also give you a chance to look at other stands and talk to other artists.

"Marketing is important but having attended several book fairs I think that there are differences between books which sell well, those that excite some interest but don't sell, and those that people neither pick up nor purchase. Quality has something to do with it but the more one attends events and discusses these matters the more experience one gains." Rosie Gilligan, artist, UK

So, how do you find artists to make a group?

Visit book fairs and talk to other artists.

Visit Zybooks online www.zyarts.com/zybooks
Read listings in journals and newsletters
Join a discussion list (see philobiblon.com for the Book Arts-L list) and ask others to contact you.

Place a listing in one of the journals, or our book arts newsletter (we will start a "lonely book hearts" section for anyone who asks).

Join a group or online network such as www.artistsbooksonline.com set up by Noëlle Griffiths, to share book fairs and exhibiting costs.

Basic preparation

Once you have booked your stand and have made your books, there are some basic things to prepare for book fairs:

Publicity material, price lists/order forms with contact details.

Business cards or postcards with contact details, to hand out to visitors (this is important, subsequent contacts can be rewarding: "an agency saw my work at a fair, took my card and emailed me saying they wanted to sell my work for me." Hannah Lobley, artist, UK).

Table covers are not always provided, and if it is more than one day, you need something to cover the books on the table overnight.

Invoice books, sales book, information sheets etc.

A shelving or small display system to make full use of a table, or small book stands.
The importance of artist’s book fairs for marketing and networking

Below are some of the replies to the question we asked:

6. How important do you think the role of the artist’s book fair or specialist event is and do these events impact on your creative output?

(6) Very important as a wider ‘reading’ public becomes aware of artists’ books through these fairs, thus creating a larger community talking about artists’ books in relation to other modes of creative production in a physical space where many different types of books (and people!) can be seen.
Paul Bettinson, artist, Norway

(6) You always get good ideas by seeing the work of others. You get a sort of dynamism and energy that builds on itself. That’s what was good in D.C. [Pyramid Atlantic artist’s book fair]– to meet so many book artists and learn about their work.
Rick Black, artist, USA

(6) It is our most positive form of promotion.
Imi Maufe, artist, UK

(6) It is very important to meet artists and exchange information.
Greta Matteucci, artist, Italy

(6) The artist’s book fair is a unique event where people especially come to see artists’ books, an item that hardly fits into any other category. At art fairs or regular book fairs people don’t take the time to investigate any artist’s books. Artist’s books require energy from the viewer. Artist’s books need a special way and a special place of presentation. Artist’s books fairs and events can stimulate one’s creative output because one sees a lot of other books and printing or binding possibilities that can be inspirational for new projects.
Helga Kos, artist, The Netherlands

(6) It is important because I can share my ideas, see and listen to how people feel about my work.
Young-Ju Choi, artist, Republic of Korea

(6) Artist’s book fairs are of great value to the student experience and they do have an impact on creative output. The chance to meet other practitioners, particularly students, and to see the range of work on display is very stimulating for them.
Jane Hyslop, artist and lecturer at Edinburgh College of Art, UK

(6) I have done three artist’s book fairs and one show in a bookstore this year as a test to see how these fairs did. I sold a few books, never quite enough to cover the hotel, travel and event costs. So, they definitely are not moneymakers for me. However, I think they have played an important role in getting my work and myself out there and building up my reputation as a book artist. It’s the exposure that has really been the best benefit of the events so far. However as far as the effect on my creative output goes, it has not been good. I find myself making cheaper and simpler books to make money instead of making the books that my heart desires. I’m struggling a bit with fulfilling my vision or meeting the customer’s demands.
Laura Russell, artist, USA

(6) I think they are very important not only for the interaction with customers but also the interaction between artists – unfortunately the time for artists to get to know each other is generally very limited.
Sue Scott, artist, USA
Extremely important given there are very few opportunities to show your work, especially to a receptive audience. I have participated in my first artist’s book fair recently and the experience was excellent. Prior to that I was showing my work at design fairs (as I also make hand made photo albums) and the visitors to these fairs didn’t quite understand the artist’s books.

Paula Steere, artist, UK

In addition, some comments from the events’ organisers themselves, we asked:

5. What is the most positive aspect of organising an artist’s book fair?
6. And the least positive aspect?

Some of the responses we received:

5. Our fair has been running for 8 years now, we have no specific criteria that needs to be met for showing work; we've never needed to exclude work, participants know what the event represents. It is important that makers meet each other and their audience and that the work is introduced to a new public. Also it is very important for students for support and encouragement both from the audience and other makers.

John McDowall, Contemporary Artist’s Book Fair, Halifax, UK

5. Networking among Canadian artists; artists meeting the public/customers; the audience is always amazed at the quality and diversity of the work; artists do sell though definitely the low price end sells better that the top. The CBBAG Book Arts Fair is very enthusiastically received and that's really enjoyable.

6. CBBAG has a real problem with covering the costs. We don't advertise nearly enough (it is essential to advertise both with display ads and posters in order to get an audience). We try to keep the table fee very low so that it isn't prohibitive for book artists, with the result that we only cover the room rental and refreshments for participants. We have to get other support in order to cover publicity and it is very difficult. Shelagh Smith, Canadian Bookbinders and Book Artists Guild (CBBAG Book Arts Fair)

Artist’s Book Fairs

These artists’ books fairs are the main ones that book artists attend, as they are the most useful, and work out to be the least expensive for a stand/table. Artist’s book fairs usually include a talk or events programme, and are a great way of meeting other artists as well as selling your books. There are many other book fairs around the world, for a list of worldwide book fairs, including the Frankfurt Book Fair, see: www.kuenstlerbuecher.de/messen.htm

Halifax Contemporary Artist’s Book Fair
Dean Clough Galleries, Halifax, HX3 5AX
Tel: 01422 250 250
book.fair@ntlworld.com
Annual, one-day artist’s book fair at Dean Clough Galleries. Contact: Chris Taylor.

London Artist’s Book Fair (LAB)
ICA, The Mall, London Organised by:
Marcus Campbell Art Books,
43 Holland Street, London SE1 9JR
Tel: 020 7261 0111
www.marcuscampbell.co.uk
lab@marcuscampbell.co.uk

Centre des Livres d’Artistes, 17 Rue Jules Ferry, 87500 Saint-Yrieix-la-Perche, France
www.centredeslivresartistes.info/
Artist’s Book centre, which also organises an artist’s book fair. Contact: Didier Mathieu.

Fine Press Book Association. The FPBA have book fairs around the UK, stands available for members. Join via their website links at www.fpba.com

Grahame Galleries organise the Artists’ Books and Multiples Fair in Australia, of which 4 have been staged since 1994. Overseas participants can submit works without having to attend. Contact: Noreen Grahame.
www.grahamegalleries.com
editions@thehub.com

Seoul International Artist’s Book Fair
COEX Hall, Seoul, Republic of Korea
www.kba21.com
bookarts@hanmail.net
The Small Publishers’ Fair organised by Martin Rogers, usually takes place in London, each October, see www.rgap.co.uk for details.

Atelier Vis-a-Vis, 38 Rue Fort-Notre-Dame 13007 Marseille, France
Tel: 04 91 33 20 80
info@atelier-vis-a-vis.org

Mainzer Minipressen Messe (Small Press Fair) is a specialist small press and artist’s book fair, originally set up as an alternative to the Frankfurt Book Fair and now renown in its own right. It takes place bi-annually and is organised and hosted by the Gutenberg Museum. For information and timetables, see www.minipresse.de

Pyramid Atlantic organise a bi-annual artist’s book fair.
8230 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring Maryland, 20910, USA
www.pyramidatlanticartcenter.org
info@pyramid-atlantic.org

Utilising the internet

Many curators and collectors use the internet for viewing and purchasing books by artists. Having your work in a viewable space is useful for directing enquiries.

Many individuals and groups of artists have their own websites, with individual artists’ contacts and books available by mail order and/or email contact, which helps to generate sales. Booklyn is a good example (www.booklyn.org).

Rand Huebsch, an American artist, has an online image for referral viewing. “I have found many names and addresses of institutional collections by online research. I have an online image that I refer them to, http://artistbooks.com/abr/nightdesert.htm”

“One issue which I think is important, is to be part of a network, possibly on the internet, of people who can share ideas about what sells and what doesn’t.” Rosie Gilligan, artist, UK

Via the internet you can access contact information on collections and see the work of other artists. You can also read essays and excerpts such as Judith Hoffberg’s at colophon, access events’ calendars, newsletters and online journals (see the further reading list and websites for full addresses). These also provide useful information on opportunities for exhibiting your work.

Showing your work online not only gives you a presence, it allows people from all over the world to view it without your having to pay the postage costs to send images or slides.

“At Emory, we don't have any special funds for artists’ books, though we do collect them when we can. It's often a collaborative effort. If a book artist contacts either Kim Collins or me, we try to meet with them together and usually include the Head of Special Collections. Catalogues and brochures are extremely important because they can be a constant reminder on my desk. I also think artists' websites are invaluable because they can give a sense of colour and structure that you can't get from a catalogue.”
Sandra Still, curator, Emory University Library, Georgia, USA

“I price my books by looking at the websites of other book artists who are at similar career stages as myself to see what they charge for similar books. Then I compare that price to other books that I’ve made to see if that price is in line with the complexity and style of work.”
Laura Russell, artist, USA
If you don’t have the means to set up your own website, join one that does it for you. Zybooks (see www.zyarts.com/zybooks) offers online gallery pages for 15 GBP a year, with the first 6 months free. Ganhda Key the site owner, designs and maintains the pages for you, with your contact details for interested viewers. Zybooks also has a free events listing service.

Philobiblon website hosts the Book Arts-L discussion list (see www.philobiblon.com) a free service where members can post information and questions or discuss aspects of book arts with others online. The site - maintained by Peter D. Verheyen - also has information and links to numerous book arts websites.

Set up or join a group such as www.artistsbooksonline.com recently established by Noëlle Griffiths for book artists to contact each other and share the costs of artist’s book events.

Dealers, publishers and bookshops also have informative websites: Granary Books, PABA Gallery, Johan Deumens, Walther Koenig (see list) and many artists who also publish books to help make artists’ books such as Keith Smith, Carol Barton and Douglas Holleley.

**Website use of images from artists’ books in collections**

Another topic which arose during this survey is that many institutional collections would like to be able to photograph artists’ works in their collection to:

- Make searchable library databases
- Use for teaching aids and presentations
- Use for promotional material when exhibiting the works from their collections

“We would like to be able to get the artists to incorporate some sort of statement when selling to libraries that the work can put on the collection website, and promotional material etc.” Catherine Polley, curator, Winchester School of Art, Library, UK

If artists agreed to this, it would help to promote artists’ books within education and allow more people to be aware of the range of works being produced, and collected by institutions.

**Some useful websites**

These websites are listed for their links and information sections which offer a wealth of useful information for book artists, from fairs and events to workshops, exhibition opportunities, societies to join, and places to see, sell, buy and study artists’ books. Most of the university sites have lots of useful links to centres and organisations.

Many established book artists also have their own websites, which are not listed here due to space restrictions. To find more information on an individual artist, type their name into a search engine (e.g. google) to find relevant sites. Artists own sites are also useful for price comparisons as many of them have order sections where works are priced.


www.artistsbooksreviews.com Joe D’Ambrosio’s Artists’ Books Reviews Journal


www.barbarawien.de Berlin based book arts bookshop and gallery.

www.bibliograph.ca Bibliograph is a library of independent publications in Montreal, covering comics, artists’ books, zines and bookworks of all stripes in its permanent collection.

www.boekiewoekie.com online catalogue of artists’ books from the artist run gallery and bookstore Boekie Woekie, Amsterdam.

www.bookart.co.uk Paul Johnson’s Book Art Project website promoting the book arts in education.

www.bookartbookshop.com the London based bookartbookshop website, with opening hours, exhibitions and current information.

www.bookarts.uarts.edu for useful bookarts web resource links.

www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk our own website with links, information, publications, essays, exhibitions, projects and a downloadable book arts newsletter section.

www.bookartscentral.com website of book arts techniques and handbooks.
www.bookarts.com a book arts directory of makers, museums and suppliers in the USA.

www.bookhad.ac.uk search engine for book arts study and research in selected institutions and collections in the UK, with useful links.

www.booklyn.org Brooklyn Artists Alliance, features their published artists’ books, courses and workshop programmes.

www.bookstorming.com Paris based artists’ books for sale by many international artists.

www.bookworks.org.uk Book Works website, lots of useful information on current and past artists’ publications, forthcoming projects and mail order. Great section of links and downloadable guides for artists.


www.centerforbookarts.org New York Center for Book Arts, exhibitions and courses.


www.colophon.com Fine Press books, plus links to a number of related websites, essays, plus Judith Hoffberg’s artists’ books events calendar.

www.colophon.com/umbrella/index.html online selections from the Umbrella book arts journal.

www.dca.org follow the links for the Centre for Artists’ Books, Dundee.

www.diabooks.org DIA Center’s bookstore including artists’ books.

www.digital.library.upenn.edu/books/access to books that are readable over the internet.

www.florenceloewy.com artists’ books archive and bookstore.


www.granarybooks.com/catalog.html full catalogue of their artists’ publications.

www.keithsmithbooks.com Keith Smith’s Books, all titles, information and mail order.


www.labookarts.com Los Angeles Book Arts Center website, information, exhibitions, reference publications and links page for exhibition opportunities.


www.library.yale.edu Yale University library’s collection of artists’ books.


www.lili.org/icb Idaho Center for the Book, plus related publications.

www.mobilivre.org Mobilivre-Bookmobile project is an annual touring exhibition of artist books/zines/independent publications. By way of a vintage Airstream, the Bookmobile visits venues in Canada and the US exposing thousands to a unique collection of independently produced book works.

www.ncfab.org the Nordic Centre For Artists’ Books (NCFAB) facilitates production, commissioning and exhibitions of artists’ books within Nordic countries.

www.onestarpress.com Paris based website of artists’ books and artists’ multiples.

www.pabagallery.com Photo Book Art Gallery website, Connecticut, USA.

www.pcba.info/etc.htm Ampersand, a bi-monthly publication from the Pacific Center for the Book Arts, USA.

www.philobiblon.com site for artists’ books information, plus links to numerous book arts websites, and the Book Arts-L discussion list.
www.popularkinetics.com Carol Barton’s kinetic book works and pop-ups with useful information, links and mail order.

www.printedmatter.org the major artist’s bookstore in New York has an online selection of artists’ books, multiples and reference books.

www.publishandbedamned.org Publish and Be Damned demonstrates individual approaches to making & distributing artists, writers and musicians work outside of the commercial mainstream through magazine fairs, a touring archive and special events.

www.sfcb.org the San Francisco Center for the Book, book arts information and exhibitions.

www.slis.ua.edu/ba/bookweb.html Book Arts at the University of Alabama, with bookweb links.

www.smallpress.org.uk with listings, advice and shop sections for all types of small press publishing.

www.societyofbookbinders.com for society information, events, membership and links.

www.tate.org.uk/research/researchservices/researchcentre/default.htm Tate Britain’s new online catalogue of artists’ books.


www.weproductions.com Weproduction’s own website with details of their artists’ books and useful links.

www.wsworkshop.org Women’s Studio Workshop information and online artists’ books archive.

www.zyarts.com/zybooks UK based exhibition and information website, featuring various artists making books, artist’s book gallery, news, events and links.

**Places to see, buy and sell artists’ books in the UK**

This is a list of the main venues and outlets, see the website list for other contacts.

**Bookartbookshop**, 17 Pitfield Street, Hoxton, London, N1 6HB  Tel: 020 7608 1333  www.bookartbookshop.com  info@bookartbookshop.com

**BALTIC** The Centre for Contemporary Art, Bookshop, South Shore Road, Gateshead, NE8 3BA  Tel 0191 478 1810  www.balticmill.com  info@balticmill.com

**Bookville** - For more information please call Graeme Walker on 07952 065556.  www.bookville.co.uk

**Centre for the Artist’s Book (CAB)**, Visual Research Centre, Dundee Contemporary Arts, 152 Nethergate, Dundee, DD1 4DY, UK  www.dca.org.uk

**Camden Arts Centre Book Shop**, Arkwright Road, London, NW3 6DG  www.camdenartscentre.org/bookshop.asp  info@camdenartscentre.org

**Dean Clough Galleries Bookshop**, Dean Clough, Halifax, HX3 5AX  Tel 01422 250250  www.deanclough.com

**EMH Arts / Eagle Gallery**, 159 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3AL  Tel: 020 7833 2674  www.emmahilleagle.com  emmahilleagle@aol.com

**Fruitmarket Gallery**, Bookshop 45 Market Street, Edinburgh EH1 1DF, Scotland  Tel: 0131 225 2383,  www.fruitmarket.co.uk/bookshop.html

**Houseroom Contemporary Art**, Granville House, Hayesfield Park, Bath, BA2 4QE  Tel 01225 314006

**Marcus Campbell Art Books**, 43 Holland Street, London, SE1 9JR  Tel 020 7261 0111  www.marcuscampbell.co.uk  info@marcuscampbell.co.uk

**Off-Centre Gallery**, 13 Cotswold Road, Bristol, BS3 4NX  Tel: 0117 987 2647  offcentre@lineone.net

**The Permanent Bookshop**, Permanent Gallery, 20 Bedford Place, Brighton BN1 2PT  Tel: 01273 710771  www.permanentgallery.com  info@permanentgallery.com
Places to see, buy and sell artists’ books around the world

Art Metropole, 788 King Street West, Toronto, M5V 1N6, Canada www.artmetropole.com info@artmetropole.com

Barbara Wien Galerie und Buchhandlung für Kunstbücher, Linienstrasse 158 im Hof, D 10115, Berlin, Germany www.barbarawien.de info@barbarawien.de

Bookstorming, Paris based books and artists’ books at more than one outlet, see: www.bookstorming.com info@bookstorming.com

Boekie Woekie, Berenstraat 16, 1016 GH Amsterdam, The Netherlands www.boekiewoekie.com boewoe@xs4all.nl

Booklyn, 37 Greenpoint Avenue, 4th Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11222, New York, USA www.booklyn.org

Center for Book Arts, 28 West 27th Street, NY 10001, New York, USA www.centerforbookarts.org

Centre des Livres d’ Artistes, 17 Rue Jules Ferry, 87500 Saint-Yrieix-la-Perche, France www.centredeslivresartistes.info

DIA Center for the Arts, NY, Bookshop, USA www.diabooks.org bookshop@diacenter.org

Florence Loewy - Books by Artists, 9/11 rue de Thorigny, Paris 75003, France www.florenceloewy.com fllo@florenceloewy.com

Graeme Galleries + Editions, Centre for the Artist’s Book, 1 Fernberg Road, Milton 4064, Brisbane, Australia www.grahamegalleries.com editions@thehub.com

Johan Deumens, Dr N. G. Piersonstraat 1, NL 2104 VG, Heemstede, The Netherlands www.artistsbooks.com deumens@artistsbooks.com

Joshua Heller Rare Books Inc. PO Box 39114, Washington DC 20016-9114, USA www.joshuahellerrarebooks.com

Moufflon Bookshop (Nicosia), P.O. Box 22375, Nicosia 1521, Cyprus www.moufflon.com.cy/

Nordic Centre for Artists’ Books, Postboks 4703, Sofienberg, 0506 Oslo, Norway http://ncfab.org

Oak Knoll Books / Oak Knoll Press, 310 Delaware Street, New Castle, DE 19720, USA www.oakknoll.com oakknoll@oakknoll.com

One Star Press, Paris based, sales etc. via website: www.onestarpress.com info@onestarpress.com

PABA Gallery llc, The Foundry Building, 33 Whitney Avenue 2nd floor, New Haven, Connecticut, CT 06510, USA www.pabagallery.com

Printed Matter Inc, 535 West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10011, USA www.printedmatter.org

Pyramid Atlantic, 8230 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland, 20910, USA www.pyramidatlantic.org pyratl@earthlink.net

San Francisco Center for the Book, 300 De Haro Street, San Francisco 94103, USA www.sfcb.org info@sfcb.org

Vamp & Tramp, Booksellers and Califia Books LLC, South Hall Building, 1951 Hoover Court, Suite 105, Birmingham, AL 35226-3606,USA www.vampandtramp.com

Walther König Buchhandlung, Ehrenstrasse 4, D 50672, Köln, Germany www.buechermarkt.net

Visual Studies Workshop, Bookshop, 31 Prince Street, Rochester, NY 14607, USA www.vsw.org/press/index.html info@vsw.org
Some Gallery, Museum, Institutional and Private Collections

Before approaching collections, please read the notes on pages 7-11. Not all of the collections listed here buy artists’ books from any artist; some hold collections of staff and student work, specific artists or visiting artists only, or have limited budgets, so find out more about them before you make any contact.

Most art colleges have small collections in their libraries too. As space here is limited, please use the internet to find postal addresses. Many collections and contacts are also published in the *Artist’s Book Yearbook*.

Artspace Mackay, Queensland, Australia
BALTIC Library and Archive, Gateshead
Bibliograph, Montreal, Canada
Bibliothèque nationale, Paris
Bibliothèque nationale du Quebec, Canada
Bienes Centre for the Literary Arts, Fort Lauderdale, USA
University of Brighton Artists' Books Collection
British Library, Modern British Collection
Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York, USA
Camberwell College of Arts, London
Carnegie Mellon University Hunt Library, Pittsburgh, USA
Centre des Livres D'Artistes, Saint-Yrieix-La-Perche, France
Centre for Artist’s Books, Visual Research Centre, Dundee Contemporary Arts
Chelsea College of Art and Design, London
Dean Clough Archive, Halifax
University of Delaware, USA
Glasgow School of Art Library
Gund Library, Cleveland Institute of Art, USA
University of Gloucestershire
Heinz Stefan Bartkowiak, Forum Book Art Edition + Galerie, Hamburg, Germany
Idaho Center for the Book, Boise, Idaho, USA
University of Iowa Libraries, Special Collections Dept, USA
Institute of the Arts, Canberra, Australia
Jaffe Collection, Florida Atlantic University
Joan Flasch Artists’ Book Collection, The Art Institute of Chicago, USA
King Saint Stephen Museum, Hungary
Library of Congress, Washington, USA
London College of Communication
Sir Kenneth Green Library, Manchester Metropolitan University
Middlesex University, Art & Design Learning Resources
Montana State University Library, USA
Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
Museum van het boek, The Hague, The Netherlands
National University of Australia
NCAD Library, Dublin, EIRE
Norwich School of Art and Design Library
Neil Crawford Artist Book Collection
Neues Museum Weserburg Bremen, Germany
Newark Public Library, New Jersey, USA
New York Public Library, USA
Reed College Library, Oregon, USA
Reinhard Gruener: Artist’s Book Collection, Germany
Rhode Island School of Art and Design, USA
Rikhardinkatu Library, Helsinki, Finland
Royal College of Art Library, Artists' Book Collection
Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Visual and Concrete Poetry, Miami, USA
Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh
Scuola Internazionale di Grafica, Venice
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, USA
State Library of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia
Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam
Syracuse University Library, Syracuse, USA
Tate Britain, London
University of the Arts, Philadelphia, USA
University of Westminster, Harrow Learning Resources Centre
UWE, School of Art, Media and Design, Bristol
Book Art Collection, James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University, USA
Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, New York, USA
Wellesley College Library, Wellesley, USA
Wexford Artists’ Book Collection, EIRE
Winchester School of Art
Women's Studio Workshop, Rosendale, USA
Word and Image Dept (NAL) V&A Museum, London
Yale Center for British Art, USA
Further Reading

The publications listed here offer some information on making, exhibiting, listing, marketing and researching artists’ books. This is by no means a comprehensive list of publications on book arts; it is intended to offer some further reading from this survey’s subject matter. Look out for catalogues from artist’s book fairs such as Halifax, as these often have contacts and essays, and for book arts publishers catalogues such as Book Works (London) and Printed Matter (New York).

Artists’ Books Reviews a quarterly journal, available by subscription from Joe D’Ambrosio, 8719 E. Via de McCormick, Scottsdale, AZ 85258-3341, USA joebooks@cox.net

Bartkowiak, Heinz Stefan Bartkowiak’s Forum Book Art, Germany (annual publication) www.forumbookart.com

Barton, Carol The Pocket Paper Engineer 2005, ISBN 0 9627752 0 7

Bicknell, Les Are There Any Limits To What Can Be Called Book Art? Essex, 1994


Coracle The Artist Publisher: A Survey, Coracle Press, London, 1986


Jones/Turner/Tyson Contemporary Artists’ Books: Parts 1 & 2, published as a supplement in Artists’ Newsletter, April 1989


Phillpot, Clive and Nordgren, Sune Outside of a Dog: Paperbacks and other Books by Artists, BALTIC, Newcastle, 2003


*The Small Press Yearbook*, available from Counter Productions, PO box 556, London, SE5 ORW, Tel 0207 274 9009


*Umbrella Journal* editor Judith A. Hoffberg, P.O. Box 3640, Santa Monica, CA 90408, USA. Available by annual subscription umbrella@ix.netcom.com

*UWE Book Arts newsletter*, a free download newsletter (plus back issues) from: www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/banlists.htm

**Magazines and Journals featuring or reviewing book arts:**

*Afterimage*
*Art in America*
*Art Journal*
*Art Monthly*
*Art on Paper*
*Art Review*
*Artforum*
*Artists’ Books Reviews (USA)*
*Artists’ Newsletter*
*Arts Canada*
*Crafts*
*Creative Review*
*Printmaking Today*
*The Art Book Journal*
*Umbrella*
*Visible Language*
Case Studies

The following case studies are designed to offer a variety of views by both new and well established book artists. Each of the case studies gives background information of how long the artist has been producing work, the types of books they produce, and how they market their work. The respondents range from those who graduated in the last 4 years, to artists who have been making books for over 30 years.

These should help to give an idea of the strategies artists use and some examples of their experiences of artist’s book fairs, marketing and approaches to collections.

Many thanks to all of the artists who agreed to contribute to these case studies and responded to our questions.

These are the questions we asked:

How long have you been creating and marketing your own work?

Approximately how many editions have you published: Since you started? and In the last 12 months?

Are your books mainly: large/small editions? or unique book works?

Do you have your own imprint?

Is this your main source of income?

What do you feel is the most difficult aspect of marketing your work?

Which artist’s book fairs have you attended in the last 12 months?

Do you find that book fairs and personal interaction with potential purchasers are the best way to sell your work?

Do you find this a positive experience or do you prefer to sell through an intermediary?

Do you feel that meeting the people who purchase your work influences your creative production in any way?

Has meeting potential purchasers / collectors given you any opportunities you may not have had otherwise, such as exhibitions etc.?

Is there any advice you feel would have helped you when you first started out?

How do you find out about ways to market your work?

Have you formulated your own pricing structure for your editions?

Have you directly approached collections to sell your own work by:
Letter?
Phone?
Email?
In Person?

Was your contact successful?

If not, do you know why it was not successful?

Did you know much about the first collection you sold to before you approached them i.e. any specialist interests?

Did you have a contact name?

Do you keep collectors up to date with information on your new publications?

Are there any aspects of marketing your work that you would like to improve or know more about, or are there any opportunities you think should be more available?

Are there any issues regarding this survey that you would like to be addressed?
ARTIST CASE STUDY 1
Andi McGarry,
Sun Moon and Stars Press, Wexford, EIRE
www.geocities.com/sunmoonstarspress/

Andi McGarry has been making artists’ books for 19 years, and has published approx 170 editions over this period, with 27 books produced in the last 12 months. His imprint is Sun Moon and Stars Press and his works are “unique unlimited editions” handmade and handpainted within the edition. His bookmaking activity balances itself up in terms of “paying for itself with a bit left, so it is self-sustaining.”

“True to my original mission brief, my press explores organic ideas. My artwork is labour intensive and mainly handproduced. The books I make combine words and images and have gone through several developmental flowerings to reach the current favourite recipe/formula, for making and doing.”

Production and Marketing

In the last 12 months, McGarry has attended the following artist’s book fairs:
London Artist’s Book Fair (LAB)
Seoul Artist’s Book Fair, Korea
BALTIC Book Fair, Newcastle

The most difficult aspect of marketing his work (at book fairs): “If you have ever been hitch-hiking, imagine the same thing only you are behind a table full of your own books, and all the punters are driving past. Literally standing behind your work at a book fair is the most difficult thing unless you have a few mates with you.”

He feels that Artist’s Book fairs are good places to make sales, “you also get to meet potential collectors, and you may be offered commissions and other equally interesting propositions. Also, artists’ books organisers will see your stuff and you might be invited to send or show etc.”

On selling himself, or through an intermediary: “The Jekyll and Hyde of it all is, you are there with the first hand know-how if anyone has a question, but it is a long haul. I find the opportunities in any one year you can foreseeably get to handle are limited, so you have to plan a campaign really carefully to have any success.”

“If you sell at a fair, you don’t pay the commission, though you do pay table money. If you plan to do a fair, my advice is do it with a mate or two, then you can go have a look around, have a chat, share the experience, and split the cost of the table money. The fair is by-and-large fairly positive and can even force you to get into gear if you are awaiting the muse. Sending books to an intermediary frees up your valuable time to make and do instead of trekking round the earth like an encyclopaedia salesman.”

Meeting the people who purchase his work has sometimes influenced his creative production “especially, if they commission you to make a book about a specific thing, for example – skeletons, which once happened to me, then the answer is yes. Skeletons would not on my general list of things I would be making; yet I found my mouth saying “Yes, sure I can do skeletons! How many do you want?”

Other collectors keep up with your stuff, and this is always really nice, because they know you and what you are up to, and they get enthusiastic. I’m thinking of a particular teacher/collector when I write this who even offered to lend any rare works back if I ever need to do a retrospective or anything.”

Meeting potential purchasers and collectors has given him some opportunities: “Normally now, when I go to do a fair or some such gig I will be hopeful that a few such possibilities that might also turn up. There could be a chance of a show; such as recently I was offered a show after the (LAB) London book fair. It’s the icing on the cake if you get a few sales too. Also, I am always looking out for people to network with for various book projects, like the Wexford Artist’s Book show [which he co-organises]. So don’t forget, meeting people is good, very good, especially if you work in a lonely garret, sometimes you need to get out, see what the rest of the world is up to, borrow a few ideas!”

“For marketing, being a creative type always helps, you must be creative in everything including your marketing, look for new outlets but tap into the ones everyone else is using too! I am always up for new things, my marketing up until now has been done as organically as my book making, I will try out all the big collections again soon with my latest new things, especially if I think they are a particularly good batch. Recently I tried a new bookfair in Korea, and enjoyed myself hugely, got inspired and broke even.”
"I have approached loads of collections and had as much success as failure, so if you can take the ‘Thanks but not today’s’ you can handle the yes please’s too."

I used to sell through Nigel Greenwood Bookshop, Maggie Smith rang me up one day and told me the Tate had been in and bought my works. I was gobsmacked (Geordie for delighted). Since then I have kept them up to speed and The Tate would have a very good selection of my work now.

"Network whenever possible, and remember Caesar’s advice, “united we stand.” Try and find some friendly book reviewers like Stephanie Brown who will give your works a line or two in their magazines etc. Keep diaries and sketch books."

ARTIST CASE STUDY 2
Becky Adams, Wales, UK

Becky Adams has been making artists’ books for about 10 years, she graduated from the Camberwell Book Arts MA in 2001. She is currently working on a book in India. Making books is not her main source of income, which is through other artworks including textiles.

Her work comprises of collected ephemera, memories, fragments of text and diary extracts. Most of her artists’ books are one-offs but she has also made small editions and plans to make more.

Production and Marketing

"Roughly speaking the price depends on whether the book is a one-off or edition, whether hand-finished or a computer print out. My last edition Analecta had a retail price of £55, as the cost of material was £600 for the edition of 40. My books are priced differently depending on materials and edition size. I try to ask a ‘fair price’ by researching other artists’ books on the internet, and in relation to my other artwork."

She has contacted one collection by letter, and has had success after selling to them at her degree show. Adams has not attended any artist’s books fairs in the last year but does exhibit whenever she can, including participating in the Wexford artist’s book exhibition.

Locating and targeting an audience are the things she finds most difficult, but she reads our newsletters and A-N (Artists’ Newsletter journal) for information on book arts opportunities. She has also contacted bookartbookshop with a view to marketing her editioned work in the future.

ARTIST CASE STUDY 3
John Bently, Liver & Lights Scriptorium, London, UK

John Bently has been publishing his work under the Liver & Lights Scriptorium and Kind Red Spirit imprints since the early 70s. He has published c. 50 editions, including 34 editions of Liver and Lights since 1984, and two editions in the last 12 months. His work includes both unique books and large editions. Liver & Lights counts for about half of his income and he has been self-employed since 1990.

He was one of the founding editors - with Stephanie Brown, Tanya Peixoto and Stefan Szczelkun - of the Artist’s Book Yearbook. This arose from their collective passion to offer book artists an opportunity to read critical essays, gain an overview of artist’s book production and to encourage a greater awareness of book arts in the UK.

"I make books. I design them, illustrate them, construct them, perform them, exhibit them, market them. They are not instant one-idea novelties, I hope they leak out their true value over time. Of the 34 volumes of the Liver & Lights series, each book has been different in size, scale and shape, from the last, depending on the ideas inside. I began life as a poet who found himself at art school, the two media eventually informing and blending until ‘the book’ became my primary medium.”
Production and Marketing

The most difficult aspect of marketing his work is: “Finding enough people who weren’t scared to spend some time with the work. In many ways, modern humans expect instant gratification and I think I make things with a very high expectation of serious study. I think patience in building up an audience has been an important lesson for me. Every performance or exhibition might bring one or two people who understand and want to own a book. So I do lots of these!”

In the last 12 months he has attended two artist’s book fairs at Halifax and LAB, London Artist’s Book Fair.

Q. Do you find that book fairs and personal interaction with potential purchasers are the best way to sell your work?

“Not the best, its just one way of many... I think the quick browsing at fairs doesn’t really do me any favours. I tend to sell to people who come to the work over a longer period. I don’t think I make work that is easy to ‘get’ in a short look. I think fairs lead to things in the future and I believe you’ve got to do them over many years (to be a regular presence) to gain benefit. I really enjoy the interaction, though... I love talking about myself! It worries me that fairs tend to push people towards deliberately making work that will sell at the expense of more challenging stuff. Actually... I think selling is a bit overrated as a drug... I know it’s a buzz to have a pocket full of cash you’ve earned through your own labours, but not as good as knowing when you’ve really made something special. It’s the actual ‘showing the world’ bit that’s the important thing.”

On selling his own work, or through an intermediary:

“I like to do both... galleries and shops and stuff are ok... but I think they push you as an artist to make work that is for a market and for sale, so really I prefer to be totally independent. I have had both good and bad experiences from intermediaries. The curse of sale-or-return being the main one for a publisher. Some of the biggest, most obvious outlets for book art can be the worst (they shall remain nameless) although I must say the bookartbookshop [Pitfield, Street, London] is an exemplary model of good practice and I wish there were more in the world.”

On opportunities arising from meeting potential purchasers or collectors:

“Yes... many... all the time... one thing leads to the next... got to be out there and not sit at home pining about that lucky break you never had... I’m a believer in you’ve got to make it happen. Get out of bed and believe in what you do with as much passion as you put in to making it. It all comes down to belief in the end.”

On Marketing: “Don’t be afraid to try anything. Take methods from unrelated areas... like... how do small theatre companies market themselves? ... how do bands?... how do the big publishers do it... take from them all and use what works. Don’t forget... when I started there was no internet... nobody owned a computer... so things have changed drastically since then. Try everything, steal methods from unrelated areas etc. why not go on a business course? if you really are interested, it’s no good turning your nose up at commerce... there are lots of possibilities. Book House in Wandsworth does good ‘intro to publishing’ courses. Middlesex University does a degree in publishing... ”

A Handful of Memories, Dundee and Concerning the Poetry of Lost Things, Harrow
John Bently, Liver & Lights Scriptorium

“I believe passionately that BOOKS ARE BOOKS. Multiples should be affordable. Surely the idea of a multiple edition is to distribute as widely as possible. I know a lot of artists say I’m underselling myself but the whole process of making books is for me a way of disseminating ideas over time, therefore I sell them for an average price of similar books in high street shops, or cheaper. Don’t be tempted into thinking that because you are an ‘artist’ your books should cost more than any others, this tends to alienate people.

On the other hand, and I don’t think this is a contradiction; I sell the one-offs (which in my case tends to be original work from which the multiples derive) for as much as I can get. I tend to think of a number and double it. My attitude is... I made this. I love this. If you want it you’ve got to seriously compensate me for its’ loss. Sometimes works. Any haggling over prices and I tell people to fuck off. I am not rich yet.”

Bently has approached collections by most means over the years, his contacts were sometimes successful “sometimes not. Some
years ago I was pissed off by rejection, now I think… more fool you… you’ll come back sooner or later and the price will be extortionate. The first few public collections approached me, actually. Some very big ones in America rejected my work because they said it wasn’t ‘Artists’ Books’, so I had to find out what that was for a few years. I still don’t know. I worked for an antiquarian bookseller for twelve years, and through this I knew the names of most of the librarians/curators in the big collections.”

He always keeps collectors up to date with information on his new publications and runs a pre-print subscription for larger editions.

Q. Are there any other aspects of marketing your own work that you would like to improve or know more about, or are there any opportunities you think should be more available?

“I don’t think this is an easy question. I think my strategy is very personal to me and I think that’s what every artist needs to develop… don’t be impatient, try things out and don’t be shy. Don’t (big mistake) think that only ‘arty’ people will buy your books. Books are books. Everybody has books. I think the word ‘artists’, for most ordinary people, in front of the word ‘book’ is a bit of a marketing no-no personally. If you don’t believe me… try it (particularly if you approach distributors).”

“I was involved some years ago with a groundbreaking publication called The Small Press Yearbook, which dealt extensively with all these issues… if you can find a copy somewhere, it might be very enlightening (copies of The Small Press Yearbook are apparently still available from Counter Productions, PO box 556, London, SE5 ORW Tel 0207 274 9009). It covered marketing for all small presses, not just artists, but we all learnt from each other. In a way, the artist’s book fairs and the Artist’s Book Yearbook grew out of this.”

ARTIST CASE STUDY 4
Francis van Maele, Redfoxpress, Foxford, EIRE www.redfoxpress.com

Francis van Maele has been publishing both his own and collaborative works with other artists since 1979; he has published 95 editions, 10 in the last 12 months. He published in Luxemburg under the Editions Phi imprint and then started Redfoxpress in 2000, based in Ireland. Redfoxpress is his main source of income.

His practice includes collaborations with poets and artists, to make hand- screenprinted, limited editions of between 20 and 75 copies each. His own artists’ books, including unique books, use a range of techniques including collage, laserprint, photographic and found objects. He also produces mail art editions.

1958, Francis van Maele, 2004

Production and Marketing

As someone who has been producing and selling his own work for over 26 years, van Maele has plenty of experience in marketing his publications. His output covers a variety of styles and collaborations (which he feels can sometimes be difficult as some interest one type of collector, others interest another, he also publishes in different languages: French, German and English). He attends many artist’s book and publishers’ fairs around the world, aided by his ability to converse in French, German and English.

In the last 12 months he has attended: Seoul Artist’s Book Fair, Marché de la Poésie in Paris, the Small Publishers’ Fair and LAB 04 in London.

As an independent artist and publisher he does much of his marketing at artist’s book fairs, and finds them a positive experience and a good way of meeting both potential customers and other artists. Attending these events has given him plenty of opportunities, for example exhibitions at museums, through contact with other artists and curators.

He also sells directly to collections, having built up his contacts over the years. His initial contacts have been by letter or email, rarely in person, and he has always checked on the collections’ special interests and had a contact name before approaching them. He always keeps collectors up to date with his new publications.
ARTIST CASE STUDY 5
Karen Hanmer, Illinois, USA
www.karenhanmer.com

Karen Hanmer has made four editions in the last twelve months, she publishes under her own name, and making books is not her main source of income.

Production

“I’ve been making artists’ books since 1997, but my efforts have been focused on trying to exhibit rather than trying to sell until about a year and a half ago. I have 28 books that are editioned, but since I print them on the computer in my studio, I print more as I need them – I do not do the entire edition at once. Most are editions of 20, and I’ve only printed a couple of some of the books.

My artists’ books are mostly in editions of 20, inkjet printed with pigment inks, imagery derived from cultural or personal memory, usually the structure or the content, sometimes both, is playful. Usually but not always, the work includes photographs. There’s usually writing that is a first hand account of some kind – something I’ve written about a memory, interviews, historical texts.

I also do some installation work, and I try to make an artist’s book to go along with the installation so there is something existing out in the world with that content, when the installation is not on display.”

Marketing

“The most difficult aspect of marketing work is that I am not sure of what kind of materials to send, how to ensure they will reach the correct person, and how to follow up. And how to do a really effective job at this and still get new art made. I suspect an in-person visit to a collection would be the most effective, but making the appointment takes a lot of nerve, and the travel takes a lot of resources.”


“I found that a lot of the visitors at Pyramid Atlantic were beginning book artists or their instructors, who wanted to find out how the exhibitors did what they did so they could go home and replicate it. I did meet two book arts librarians who said they would buy something in the future. I was asked by several people to send a workshop proposal to their institution.”

“I’m represented by Vamp and Tramp/Bill Stewart. The people he visits will definitely purchase books (though not necessarily mine). But I will not be able to tell them the story behind the work, and I suspect that that connection to the work will facilitate the purchase decision.”

“The encouragement of the meeting people who purchase my work keeps me going in general, but I would hate to think it would lead me to make more work of a certain theme or using a certain structure that no longer interested me because people might buy it. Opportunities for exhibitions lectures and to teach workshops have arisen from meeting people. People have also asked me to send them slides to use in their lectures.”

Hanmer finds out ways for marketing her work through “The book arts list serve, [see www.philobiblon.com to join the discussion list] talking to book artist friends and looking at other book artists’ resumes. I wish I had understood that book art will not sell from the same exhibition venues where artists of other mediums show, and that selling work to collections requires different promotional materials than soliciting exhibition opportunities.”

Hanmer prices her work by the cost of materials, making, and adds a little extra for making slides of the book, promoting and exhibiting it. If she attends more book fairs in the future she will also try to factor in money towards travel etc.

“I have done only three, in-person visits. Twice I made an appointment and met the librarian in the company of someone they already had a relationship with. One of these friends left the meeting after the introduction, the other stayed and showed the librarian how my work would be an asset to their teaching collection. Another time I contacted a librarian at the suggestion of

Patriot Alphabet, Karen Hanmer, 2004

Faster Higher Further First: a sampler of women aviators
Karen Hanmer, 2005
someone in another state who knew her – she was a mentor to him.”

“Two of my three meetings with librarians have led to sales, the third will one day, but he has not bought yet. Other people have told me that it takes him months to buy. I’ve also sent slides to a friend who had offered to walk them over to the Special Collections librarian at her university and was able to persuade her to buy something.”

“I have sent promotional mailings and have then had the offer of exhibition opportunities, requests to send workshop proposals, an offer to represent my work, and a few inquiries about the work but no immediate sales. But I have not done follow-up phone calls when I have sent materials cold. I believe that would make a big difference. I only have contact names for about a quarter of the collections on my mailing list.

A friend and I have pooled our mailing lists and are doing internet research to fill in the blanks. Everyone’s work is so rich and unique, we do not need to feel that we are competing with each other. I will also be sending out a promotional mailing of some kind, annually.”

ARTIST CASE STUDY 6
Heather Hunter, Buckinghamshire, UK
www.hunterbooks.co.uk

Heather Hunter has been making books for 12 years under the imprint Heather Hunter Books. This is not her main source of income.

Hunter’s books are mostly unique book works “of unusual structure containing a variety of traditional printing techniques as well as digital. Text, image and of my design. Paper cuts as books, or as a basis for digital work.”

Production and Marketing

For Hunter, the difficulties of marketing are “finding the right venue, that is; where books can be handled, because my books have unusual or hidden aspects that cannot be experience when viewed behind glass.”

In the last 12 months, she has shown her work at three artist’s book fairs: Contemporary Artist’s Book Fair, Halifax; LAB ’04 and Pages 7, Paris, which she finds are the best places to sell her work. “It is a positive experience to get feedback, and observing people handling the books can sometimes give me new ideas, because books must be a tactile experience as well. It gives me a buzz to see a buyer handle a book in a manner appropriate for my artist’s book as well as to be absorbed in the content. It motivates me to produce more.”

Meeting potential purchasers has resulted in “requests for workshops or commissions, less often exhibitions. If any of these happens they may buy one of my books on a second meeting, or if visited in their own environment where they feel relaxed and comfortable.”

The advice that would have helped when Hunter first started out would have been: “To know that I would need all the paperwork prepared, invoices, information about self and books etc. ready for that sale. But also to know that I must not get disappointed if purchasers and collectors do not buy the first time they see a book, sometimes it happens that they come back 2-3 years later and ask for THAT book.”

Hunter has found ways to market her work by experience: “marketing at craft shows was a disaster, small cost but not right. I now visit Book Fairs and galleries first, finding out if they are the correct venue for my books. Rationalising my marketing budget and finding out that over one year, the one showing at the London Artist’s Book Fair was better value than small galleries several times a year. Because my books are one-of-a-kind, my output is not vast, so targeting one or two fairs works for me.”

Her pricing costs are the same for each unique book and include: costs of materials, design and manufacture time. She will adjust prices to be reasonable. “By having a range of books, small simple structures up to intricate experimental construction, it spreads the price and the profit.” Hunter has not approached any collections herself, but has sold directly to collections through book fairs and subsequently keeps them up to date with her new work.

“At the end of the day we are trying to sell items to the public like any other salesperson. Always assume that every person who approaches you is a buyer. It is no good having a wonderful marketing strategy worked out if you are unapproachable and believe that as an artist you have some special rights.”

Progress Heather Hunter, 2004
ARTIST CASE STUDY 7
Helen Douglas, Weproductions, Scotland, UK
www.weproductions.com

Helen Douglas has been making artists’ books since 1972, publishing with Telfer Stokes under the Weproductions imprint. She has produced over 26 editions to date. This is not her main source of income. Douglas also uses income generated from sales of her books to pay for new publications.

“Weproductions publications are characterised by unlimited, paperback format and offset printing. The publications demonstrate an exploration of the book form and structure, visual conjunctions, sequence and narrative.”

Production

“Producing work (as Weproductions) we have always tried to make books that sell at a reasonable price. Production costs are a definite consideration in the making of work, but not to stifle an idea. When a book is made and bound, there is in its handling a suggestion of where its price should fall within our price range of £6-25.

Weproductions has a number of pricings, 7, 12, 15, 20 and 25 pounds. A book such as Unravelling the Ripple (2001) priced by another publisher threatened to undermine our own price structure, and it did for a while. However, things have calmed down now and the book sits within our own prices as a subsidised production. With Illiers Combray (2004 with Zoë Irvine) which also received funding for publication, we priced it according to our own price structure. We believed that priced at £25 this is its true and workable sale value. With books that are going out of print, we raise the price considerably.”

Marketing

Douglas feels that the most difficult aspect of marketing her work is that of establishing outlets in museum and gallery bookshops, which she feels could be the perfect venues. She believes there should be a cultural commitment for gallery and museums bookshops to display and develop the market for artists’ books with the public. She wonders if there would be a chance for group action, to convince galleries etc. to do this.

In the last 12 months, Douglas has shown her books (with Telfer Stokes) at the following six book fairs: BALTIC, Newcastle; Dean Clough, Halifax Pays-Paysage, Saint Yrieix la Perche, France Seoul International Artist’s Book Fair, Republic of Korea; Small Publishers’ Fair, London; LAB 04, ICA, London

Douglas finds artist’s book fairs a great way to sell her work, providing the fairs are well-advertised and in a good venue; well-attended fairs are a positive experience. “Meeting a purchaser can give a great sense of affirmation in relation to our making of books, and has provided many opportunities which may not have arisen otherwise.”

Douglas is also happy to sell through an intermediary as long as they are genuinely keen on the work. “Over the years it has become evident when there is an enthused bookshop operator or seller, sales go up dramatically.”

“Influences of people on production is only through watching carefully how ‘the viewer’ handles, reads, looks at our books, which can be very instructive. Taking stock of one’s own brimming confidence or apprehension as a viewer looks can also alert one to areas of confidence or uncertainty in one’s work which need to be addressed. This can be creative.”

Talking to other book artists and joining with others (as Telfer and herself have done) helps to encourage each other: “two people on the scene for contacts and outlets is easier than one and more of a force.”

Marketing books to collections has been successful, Douglas has always made sure she has a contact name and knows if they have an interest in artists’ books before approaching them. She also keeps collectors up to date with new publications information.

Her advice to those just starting out would be: “begin, it is only by beginning in books that you begin to understand what the issues are.”
ARTIST CASE STUDY 8
Imi Maufe, Bristol, UK

Imi Maufe has been making books since 1998, she graduated from UWE with an MA in Printmaking in 2004. Since then she has been making editions, both by herself and as part of funded artists’ residencies in the UK. Books are not her main source of income. She has made 12 editions, with 4 produced in the last 12 months.

Production

“I make artists’ books often as a way to convey my experience of specific journeys or incidents to the outside world, most of my artists’ books are an exploration into how you can translate that experience onto paper.”

Marketing

Pricing structures: “my loose structure is to think of an edition of say 30 books at £30 each is a total of £900 for a body of work. This sounds reasonable until you think of a print, at say 30 prints at around £100 each would be £3000. I think artists’ books are generally undervalued, for the amount of time that goes into producing them, compared to a print.” As her editions start to sell out, she will increase the price of the few remaining copies.

Maufe has shown her work at four artist’s book fairs in the last 12 months as part of a group and has also shared a stand at Halifax book fair. The majority of her sales are through these fairs, which she feels are a very positive experience “often you don’t get to see artists face-to-face, or peoples’ responses to your work” which book fairs provide an opportunity for.

Book arts is something she fell into by chance, and she sees it as another medium to work with. She benefited from “a fantastic 3 month elective in Book Arts at Louisiana State University, USA, run by Lesley Koptcho” which inspired her to make more work in the book format.

Maufe prefers to sell her own work at book fairs rather than through a dealer as she enjoys buying from other artists at these events as it feels more personal, and would like to think that works both ways. She feels strongly that artist’s book fairs are the most positive from of promotion for the book arts, that they provide a good means of telling the public about the world of book art.

ARTIST CASE STUDY 9
Magnus Irvin, The Daily Twit, London, UK
www.dailytwit.com

Magnus Irvin has been publishing editions, including the Daily Twit zine since 1978. He is also a filmmaker, printmaker, sculptor, writer and scenic artist; publishing books is not his main source of income.

Production

Irvin’s books range from editions of 7 – 106, the Daily Twit is usually published in editions of 500 – 600 copies.

Marketing

“The Daily Twit is priced to allow me to give away up to 30% of the papers and still make a small profit. My books are priced on a 50% profit basis.”

Irvin has approached collections himself, which have been mostly successful; he keeps collectors up to date with his publications on “a small basis” and has attended two book fairs in the last 12 months (Small Publishers’ Fair and LAB 04, London). He often finds out about ways to market his work by word of mouth, and through meeting people at book fairs and events. He would like to be involved in more readings and performances at book fairs. Irvin feels that the advice that would have helped him when he started out would be to take a more professional approach to archiving work.
ARTIST CASE STUDY 10
Susan Johanknecht, Gefn Press, London, UK

Susan Johanknecht has been creating and marketing her own work since 1977. She has published over 30 editions, 3 in the last 12 months. Johanknecht has her own imprint Gefn Press, and is also Course Leader of the Book Arts MA Degree at Camberwell College of Arts, London.

Johanknecht uses the book format as “a primary site for poetic and collaborative practice”. In the 1980s and early 1990s, Johanknecht utilised many direct printmaking techniques to make her work. Since the mid 1990s has used mainly digital processes and often incorporates CD ROMs into her book works. Johanknecht often works with other artists and writers and has been involved in two large collaborative projects (1997-2000 and 2003-4).

Production and Marketing

Johanknecht finds the most difficult aspect of marketing her work, is finding the time to follow up contacts made at book fairs and events. Book fairs are a good way to market work, make contacts and be offered opportunities that may not arise otherwise.

Johanknecht feels that having to explain your work to people at such events is useful and that these events can be especially positive experiences if you are selling a wide range of work, not just your own. Selling through an intermediary though is less time consuming.


Advice she felt would have helped her when starting out, is:

“Do not be daunted by the prospect of approaching libraries and bookshops directly.”

“Consider setting up distribution collaborations with your peers.”

Her pricing structure is “a balance of making sure costs are covered and ‘what does this look like it would sell for?’”

Johanknecht has directly approached collections and bookshops by letter and email, sometimes in person. She knew about the specialisms of the collections and had a contact name before she approached them. Johanknecht also keeps collectors up to date with information on new publications. Unsuccessful contacts were with some bookshops, which were unwilling to take on unusual formats or deal with small publishers. She also finds out about opportunities to market her work through word of mouth and the ABYB.

Johanknecht feels that distribution and marketing are ongoing issues for artists’ books; she suggests some ideas to overcome the difficulties of marketing artists’ publications:

“An artist’s book equivalent of Cornerhouse or SPD would be wonderful – without any restrictions that the artist or author should not be the publisher. An ‘institution’ that could unify the struggle to get space (and respect) in bookshops and also approach a wider range of libraries. The ‘institution’ could provide the expertise and professionalism in marketing, that artists are for the most part, unable to muster as well as produce their work.”

ARTIST CASE STUDY 11
Emily Larned, Red Charming Press, New York, USA www.booklyn.org

Emily Larned graduated in 2000, with BA from Wesleyan University, with High Honors in Studio Art (Printmaking & Typography). She has been making artists’ books as her primary activity since graduation; but began publishing zines when she was 16 in 1993. She has published 32 zines since then, with 11 publications since 2000 under her Red Charming imprint. Her publishing and the work she performs for the Booklyn artist’s book collective in Brooklyn, constitute her total income. Her editions are usually between 25 – 55 copies for letterpress, hand-printed artists’ books; 300 copies for zines. Larned keeps the prices of her zines low as she would rather people be able to afford them than make a profit.

Production

“Since I was a child, I have been obsessed with books. Always a voracious reader and
writer, I began self-publishing zines when I was sixteen years old. What first appealed to me about zines was not only the union of art, design and writing, but also the democratic nature of the book form. The book, unlike other art forms, is instantly accessible to anyone who is literate.”

“I pursued bookmaking at Wesleyan and on my own through coursework, a bookbinding internship, a letterpress apprenticeship, and historical and theoretical research. The more time I devoted to books, the more their role in our society began to interest me in another way. Books are manufactured objects that have been the primary receptacles of human knowledge for the past 2,000 years. The status of the book as both product of culture and producer of culture makes it a particularly poignant form in which to explore the idea that knowledge itself is produced, not an a priori fact. Excited by this concept, I began to make artists’ books that were inquiries into history and science: how we know what we know. It was this interest that propelled projects such as the Seeing Trilogy, Syntax Machine, and Galois Fields, and that continues to drive my work today. These titles are letterpress printed and hand bound; this interest in historical processes emphasises my engagement with the history of the book.”

“Only my most inexpensive work sells at book fairs. However, personal interaction with librarians & curators while I am travelling to different institutions for Booklyn has proven to most helpful. Artist’s Book fairs can be exhausting, but they can also be fun: it is good to meet other book artists, see other work, meet students, etc. For sales, however, they are rather dismal compared to meeting with institutions directly. Other Booklyn agents are very successful at selling my books when I am not present, but I do feel librarians have a better understanding of my work when I am there.”

“I would encourage other young artists to band together into informal artist alliances, along the lines of the Booklyn model. The best way to sell work is to get it physically in front of curators and librarians, and it makes the most financial sense to share the expenses of doing so (travel costs, etc.) with fellow artists who possess the same needs and goals.”

Approaching collections by sending in a catalogue with letter yielded no sales but following up with an email did. “This is my preferred method to contact a person in order to set up an actual in-person appointment. I also send out email announcements about new editions, and normally receive a few orders by this method. I find curators & librarians quite approachable and friendly. Even if an institution does not purchase my work, it is always good to make more contacts and to keep them aware of the work I am producing.”
“In my experience, most curators are reluctant to buy editions priced over $100 that they haven’t actually seen. If they are very familiar with my work, a few curators may spend about $300 on new editions without seeing them. However, I have never had someone buy an $850 book without first seeing it.”

Larned keeps collections up to date with her work by sending out email announcements with jpeg images, and maintains her own page on the Booklyn website (www.booklyn.org)

ARTIST CASE STUDY 12
Laura Russell, Simply Books, Ltd, Oregon, USA  www.laurarussell.net

“I was first exposed to the book arts in 1996 and have been hooked ever since. I have published 14 editions since I started and 16 one-of-a-kind artist books, with four new, editioned books in the last year. I call myself Simply Books, Ltd. However, I may need to change that at some point. It seems that there is a new U.S. bookstore chain that has stolen my name! Since I found this out I have been trying to promote my own name instead of the press name. I’m thinking that if I try to create a brand of “myself” it might be easier for people to remember.”

Q. Is this your main source of income?
“No. Unfortunately I don’t quite make enough money to support myself yet. I make just enough to support my habit! My supplies, travel and business expenses are covered, just not much profit. I am lucky to have a husband who is supportive both financially and artistically.”

Production

“I have explored many forms of book arts since I started. I’ve done painted books, collage books and even fine bindings. Most prevalent have been books using my own photography. This has been especially fun since I’ve been taking photos since I was about 13 years old. For the last two or three years, almost all of my books have been photographic artists’ books. I take photos of language in the environment and use them in my artists’ books - things like graffiti, brick wall ghost signs, neon signs and any other kind of lettering in the landscape. I started out making mostly unique books, but for the last two years or so almost all of my books have been editions of 5 to 200 copies.”

Marketing

Russell has two main difficulties with marketing: “first, convincing people that the book arts are really ‘art’, and second, explaining what the heck is an artist’s book. I’ve often tried to sell to more traditional art venues, such as art galleries, which makes the job of explaining and educating very important. At least when you sell a painting, people know what do with it!”

Heads Up! Laura Russell, 2004

In the last 12 months Russell has shown her work at the following book fairs: “In 2004 I had tables at Book Fest in New York, the Seattle Antiquarian and Artist’s Book Fair and at Pyramid Atlantic. I also did two small, fair-type events at bookstores this year. I do make sales at these fairs, but it’s usually not enough to go home with a tidy profit. But fairs are the best way to get exposure for my work. I’ve made many, many contacts at these events to the point where I now consider fairs to be not a money-making event, but a networking event. At this early stage of my career the networking and exposure is more important than money.”

“I find selling at book fairs a very positive experience. If nothing else I love listening to the viewers’ comments about how much they love my work. And I love just standing back and watching their reactions to my work. I view this as validation that my work is good and that is important. It’s hard to get that validation when you work alone. I tend to get a little too isolated in my studio and it is nice to get out and be praised. That networking and validation would be harder to come by if I sold only through an intermediary. I like meeting the customer and chatting about my work. In addition, I do sell through intermediaries.”

“Heads Up! Laura Russell, 2004

“Meeting the people who purchase my works sustains my desire to keep going down the path I am on. However, I do find myself making simpler, less expensive books because they sell faster at fairs than the more complex and expensive books. It feels a bit like I am giving in to my customers in that way. If I like making complex expensive books, it’s better to sell them to bookstores.”
books, then that’s what I should do. But it’s hard to always do your own thing when you want to make some money!”

“Advice about how to price my work would have been helpful when I first started out. That is such a vital part of successful marketing and an area that gets very little attention, perhaps because it is so difficult! For marketing advice I mainly asked other book artists what they do. When I first started out, I paid close attention to marketing-related banter on list serves and I also looked at other artists’ websites. Their CVs and artist statements gave me lots of ideas about marketing.”

On approaching collections: Russell has initiated contacts by letter and phone. “My in-person contacts have been the most successful of all. I try to visit collections whenever I travel and for some reason I get much better sales when they can see and touch my work. Letter contacts have been okay, but I find that I have to follow up each mailing with a phone call. Even if the collection knows me and collects my work they still need a nudge to make the sale.”

“The first collection I ever approached was the Museum of Modern Art in New York. I was in New York to visit family and made the rounds to several collections during that trip. MOMA was my first target and my first sale and it was just sheer luck. I knew nothing about their collection or interests, which was very embarrassing. I just kept phoning the special collections department until I got a live person and not an answering machine. It took me about two weeks of calling almost every day to finally get through. Luckily the person who finally answered was a curator for the collection and I was able to set up an appointment with her right then. Now I always find out what a collection is interested in before I approach them at all.”

“I send out postcards or prospectuses about new books and on occasions I send out a “newsletter” to tell my collectors what’s new. I would like to learn how to connect with more private collectors outside of the book fair environment. And, I wish there were more opportunities to show books in art galleries or other fine art situations.

The book arts need more exposure in the traditional art world. Given that the special collections market is limited, we’ve got to expand our base of potential customers by getting out into new and untried venues, and reaching new people and turning them on to book arts.”

ARTIST CASE STUDY 13
Marshall Weber, Booklyn, New York, USA
www.booklyn.org

Marshall Weber has been making artists’ books for 30 years and has published 40 editions, with 8 produced in the last 12 months. He publishes under his own name and this is his main source of income.

His works are half unique, half small editions “Multi - and interdisciplinary, often involving handmade, unique or small editioned book forms with handwriting, painting, collage, photography or installation and site specific performance work using literature. Both practices focus on political, ecological and linguistic subject matter and often integrates the three.”

Marketing

Weber’s main difficulties with marketing are that “Collections do not collect comprehensively or consistently; internalised self-censorship can limit the collecting of radical, political or sexual subject matter.”

He has attended four book fairs/events in the last 12 months: Frankfurt Bookfair, Pyramid Atlantic, Wells College and ARLIS New York. He does not make the majority of his sales through book fairs “Sometimes it can be positive but noise, the distractions of other vendors and competing events make it a poor situation for serious sales.”

He feels that meeting the people who purchase his work can sometimes influence his production as he enjoys discussing the work with potential purchasers. “Yes, I expect engaging intellectual and aesthetic dialogue from collectors and curators, my artmaking is a social thing – astute, sincere and informed criticism will always be taken to heart by me, especially from collectors and curators I trust. This may not always directly affect my work but it can influence it, especially when I agree with the critique or observation. Of course I ignore a lot of inane comments as well...”
His advice on finding ways of marketing is “research, networking and socialising. Internet expertise and subtle interrogation skills are necessary, always ask for referrals.” [See the section on pricing for Weber’s pricing structure method]

Weber has approached collections by many means and his contacts are usually successful. He always makes sure he knows about the collection and has a contact name before approaching them, but has had some unsuccessful experiences when: “they did not personally want the work, they could not afford the work, the work was not appropriate for their collection, they had had a bad day that day, they were pissed at me for dising them in the past, someone else sold them the work before I got there, I was too pushy, I was not pushy enough, their Saturn was rising in their retrograde moon house, somebody told them I was a creep, the work fell apart in their hands, there was a fire in the library- (this really happened!).”

Q. Are there any other aspects of marketing your own work that you would like to improve upon or know more about. Are there any opportunities you think should be more available, or any issues you would like to address as part of this survey?

“Yes. I wish all the old farts would tell their collectors and subscribers that there are about four thousand new book artists who are doing really interesting and vital work that has nothing to do with reprinting the Bible and dead peoples’ poetry in fine press editions.”

“And sorry to be very eighties and all but where are all the people of colour and the queers and the South Americans and Africans and Middle Eastern and Asian book artists in the field? Which is not to say there is no diversity in the field there are some completely brilliant examples of diversity but its not enough, the level of diversity does not reflect the culture and certainly doesn’t reflect the population (at least in the USA)!”

“Why are 90% of the librarians I meet white and why are 75% women until you get to the real high positions when 90% are men?”

“Why do 90% of the conferences have the same speakers – taking about the same tired subjects?”

“Why is there no international Artists Book Organisation?”

“Where are the poets!!???”

“Why are 90% of Artist’s Book exhibts survey shows?”

ARTIST CASE STUDY 14
Melanie Ward, Bristol, UK
www.melanieward.co.uk

Melanie Ward graduated from an MA in printmaking at UWE, Bristol in 2004. She works freelance and has her own studio in a shared artists’ building. Ward’s works are mostly small editions (up to 30), with some open editions, made with materials she can readily access.

Production and Marketing

Ward’s pricing structures differ for small editions and open editions. For the small editions she will add the following costs: materials, printing, then £20 an hour for her time spent planning and making the book. This total is then divided by the no. of books in the edition to reach the selling price. Ward will slightly alter this if she feels it is very much out of line with the prices of her other editioned works. This price includes any commission and stays the same whether selling directly or through a gallery. For open editions, Ward will price her books at what she thinks she can get for them (usually £5 or below) and hopes this will allow her to sell plenty of them.

Q. Are there any other aspects of marketing your own work that you would like to improve upon or know more about. Are there any opportunities you think should be more available, or any issues you would like to address as part of this survey?

“Yes. I wish all the old farts would tell their collectors and subscribers that there are about four thousand new book artists who are doing really interesting and vital work that has nothing to do with reprinting the Bible and dead peoples’ poetry in fine press editions.”

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“Why is there no international Artists Book Organisation?”

“Where are the poets!!???”

“Why are 90% of Artist’s Book exhibts survey shows?”
For Ward, the most rewarding aspect of the personal interaction with potential purchasers at book fairs and events, is the feedback. Ward feels this is useful in terms of future developments of her work, and positive feedback is of great encouragement. The potential for meeting other related artists can also lead to collaborations on other projects. The least rewarding part is the time spent in relation to sales made.

Ward can see the benefits of selling her own work personally and that of through an intermediary, with the latter’s advantage of freeing up more time to get on with making her work.

So far, she has not directly approached any collections to sell her own work, which has been purchased by them, from group stands at book fairs. She would like to know more about other artists’ experiences of selling and marketing their work, and how best to approach collections.

ARTIST CASE STUDY 15
Mette D. Ambeck, Thisted, Denmark
www.ambeck.mdd.dk

Mette Ambeck has been producing her own editions since 2000, when she graduated from an MA in Communication Design, with her main body of work being artists’ books. She has made six editions since then and one in the past year. She publishes under her own name and this is not her main source of income.

Her books are mainly small editions and unique book works. "I experiment with formats, from traditional binding to more sculptural approaches, using hand-cut illustrations and typography."

Production and Marketing
Ambeck would like to know more about the "how, who and where" of marketing her books. In the last 12 months she has shown her work at the following four book fairs: LAB’04, ICA, London; Small Publishers’ Fair 2004, Conway Hall, London; 1st Seoul International Book Arts Fair, COEX Seoul, South Korea; 7th International Contemporary Artist’s Book Fair, Halifax

Ambeck finds book fairs and personal interaction with potential purchasers a positive experience, although she is not sure if it is the best way to sell her work: “but it is a nice way and I also think it is important for some people to see and speak to the artist. I do find the personal interaction a positive experience and valuable too, though at times it can be exhausting" [when you are exhibiting alone on your own stand].

Q. Do you feel that meeting the people who purchase your work influences your creative production in any way?

“Yes and no. By facing people and observing them and what they buy, my work does get directed towards what sells, but I also keep making pieces I just feel I have to make. Also if people give me valid criticism, I do take it into consideration.”

Helpful advice when she first started out would have been "knowing more about how and who to market the work to, and that you have to make contact with the collections yourself.” She has since found out more ways to market her work through networking and experience.

Her pricing structure is mainly based on the cost of materials (her work is very intricately made) and she feels it would be unrealistic to cost the whole time spent making each piece.

“I estimate what I think people may be willing to pay for them, based on what I have seen others price their books at, and what I think is a reasonable price. I then take it to a book fair and test it. If it is sells really well, I put the price up next time, until I don’t feel comfortable putting it any higher.”

“To be honest I find it very difficult and at times frustrating. Because it is a book and not a painting, it is hard to set a price that even resembles the amount of work that goes into it. Books over £100, I find, take forever to sell. I make a cheaper range of books too, ranging at about £20 - 40, just to be sure to sell something – even though I know it is generally too cheap; it is just no fun to be at fair and not sell anything.”

Ambeck has sold her work to collections through contacts passed on to her. “Having found out that I need to make contact with collections and collectors, I intend to do that more in the future and generally try and be more active about marketing myself.”
ARTIST CASE STUDY 16
Mike Nicholson, Ensixteen Editions, London, UK

Mike Nicholson is a graphic artist, working as an illustrator, storyboard artist and lecturer. He also publishes his own editions of artists’ zines (since 1999 under Stokey Comics, and more recently as Ensixteen Editions). He has published eight editions of his Ron comic since 1999, plus special editions, collaborations and two bio-autographic zines. He has published two editions in the last 12 months.

He states that the bulk of his professional illustration was in editorial publishing, with storyboard artwork for advertising, television and film. His small publishing material is predominantly ‘comic strip’ (words and images) and is not his main source of income.

Production and Marketing

Nicholson has attended four artist’s book fairs over the last twelve months, two at Dean Clough Galleries, Halifax (04 and 05) the Small Publishers’ Fair and LAB 04 in London. He feels that the most difficult aspect of marketing his work is “getting past the (still widespread) snobbery about comic books. Also a certain type of punter finds my work off-putting in that it states ideas/uses humour in a field where self-conscious obscurity can be more the name of the game.”

He particularly enjoys meeting the readers and finds book fairs overall a very positive experience, where he has made some interesting connections. He would prefer to sell his own work rather than through an intermediary as that means a loss of profits. He would however like to place his work in a broader range of outlets.

He enjoys feedback on individual issues but it does not alter his intent or style. Before he started to attend book fairs he priced his work fairly low, with the intention of just getting it out into the world, but now he has a wider audience he prices his work so that he at least recoups the costs of production and hopefully makes some profit. Prices vary according to page count.

He has approached a few collections personally; it isn’t a priority to get work into them, but he is pleased when it happens. He feels that a more consolidated internet presence would boost his marketing and distribution.

ARTIST CASE STUDY 17
Ral Veroni, Valencia, Spain
www.indeprintent.com

Ral Veroni has been making artists’ books since 1985, he publishes under his own name and has produced 19 books in total, with two made in the last 12 months. This is not his main source of income.

He has produced both small and larger editions “I usually combine in my work a social engagement approach with poetics, a political and personal critique and some sense of humour to lighten the burden of drama. The artist's book works in some cases, as an extension or part of public art projects.”

Production and Marketing

Distribution is the most difficult aspect of marketing his work; he would really like to find a reliable distributor for his larger editions. He has not been to any artist's book fairs in the last year but has shown at 3 or 4 through agents. He finds that book fairs and personal interaction are the best ways to sell his work but “I find that friendly intermediaries are better for selling my work than myself.” He is happy to sell his work himself or through a dealer.

He markets his own work in Argentina: “through street, second-hand book, market stalls and some specialised bookshops.” In Spain: "I also find that small bookshops are better than galleries. Some local booksellers
are easy to talk with. If I find affinity and goodwill I leave my work with them.” In Britain: “specialist bookshops and galleries.”

“Having said this I find that the word ‘market’ is a bit misleading: I do not expect to make a living with my books. I see them as my channel to communicate. Independent, movable, adaptable. They do not depend on venues, cultural tendencies or indifferent art officials. They are an alternative to the lack of spaces, funding or workshops. A good option for nomadic tendencies.”

“It might take ten years but at the end I usually sell out my editions. I think this probably covers the whole cost of the edition, although I don’t evaluate it like an accountant. Some publishers suggest putting the RRP at 6 times the production cost of a book. If there is a distributor involved, they take between 50 and 60% of the RRP. If you deal directly with some specialist bookshops, they tend to take between 40 and 50%. Small bookshops (not necessarily specialising in artists’ books) are more sympathetic and they tend to charge 30% (more commonly in Spain).”

He has not approached any collections personally but some bookshops and workshops that have his work, have done this successfully.

ARTIST CASE STUDY 18
Deb Rindl, Talk Sense Press, London, UK

Deb Rindl has been making editions for 10 years and has published approx 20 since starting, with one in the last 12 months. Rindl publishes under her own imprint of Talk Sense Press. This is not her main source of income.

“I make small editions (usually around 20 in an edition, or anything between 5 and 100 - once 950) of ‘sculptural’ bookworks. Sometimes they contain text but not always. Over the last few years they have been printed mostly by computer, but when possible I prefer to print letterpress. I also use some collage, monoprints and various other media.”

Production and Marketing

“The hardest thing is to market and make work at the same time! It’s incredibly time-consuming and I could easily spend all my spare time marketing and never make any work. You really need a marketing person so you can get on with the work yourself!”

In the last 12 months Rindl has shown her work at Halifax Artist’s Book Fair. She finds that book fairs and personal interaction are the best ways to sell her work. “When I was first starting out I used to apply for exhibitions all the time and although I had a good response and ended up showing work all over the country and also the USA, Japan and Europe, I hardly ever sell anything at exhibitions. The personal interaction is what creates the sales, even if not at that precise moment.”

“The exception is one dealer in the USA to whom I send work from time to time and he seems to be able to sell it quite well. I do enjoy talking to people about my work although sometimes it can feel like overload. I suppose in an ideal world it would be wonderful just to leave it to someone else.”

Meeting the people who purchase her work has not influenced her creative production. “Sometimes people say, “It would be nice if you did … x” and I do make a mental note; but then I tend to go ahead and do what I was going to do anyway.” Meeting purchasers or collectors has given her some opportunities “I think it has paved the way to various bits of work e.g. teaching workshops, and yes, probably a few exhibitions.”

Q. Is there any advice you feel would have really helped you when you first started out?

“I don’t think I would have wasted my time applying for any and all exhibitions – as time went on I became more picky about what I would apply for and got to the stage where I only applied for exhibitions which specifically referred to wanting work with e.g. text, or a particular size, or whatever. I applied for loads of exhibitions where clearly in retrospect they were looking for painting or installation art etc. and it was just a waste of my time.”

Rindl finds ways to market her work mostly word of mouth. “But in the past I’ve used Artists’ Newsletter’s opportunities pages which can be brilliant.”

Rindl has approached collections herself, usually with success, although “sometimes it has been made clear that they do not collect my sort of work and they are looking for e.g.
fine press bookbinding/whatever”, she always has a contact name. “The first collection I sold to was the Museum of the Book in The Netherlands, whose contact details were given to me by my tutor at college. I didn’t know a lot about them apart from the fact that they collected artists’ books.”

To keep collectors up to date with her work “I usually use my Christmas card as a good opportunity to send out an up to date brochure. If I was making more work I would do this more than once a year but as my production is currently slow there is no need.”

“Of course I would like to sell more but at the moment am not in a position to put in the time and effort required. It would be good if there were more small artist’s book fairs around the country, like Halifax or Oxford [bi-annual Fine Press Book Fair] to reach the people who are in other areas. They could be fairly cheap, like Halifax, rather than a big investment, like the London Artist’s Book Fair, to encourage people to book a stand.”

**ARTIST CASE STUDY 19**
Miriam Schaer, New York, USA

Miriam Schaer makes unique books, with c. “5 of various ‘densities’ - from very simple to very complex” completed in the last 12 months.

“I took my first book class whilst in art school (Philadelphia College of Art, now University of the Arts) in 1977. There was no book arts programme there at the time, as there is now. I moved to NYC in 1978, found the Center for Book Arts in 1980, and began taking classes.

“I make one of a kind, sculptural books from clothing, and am beginning to make installations, to place these pieces in context. I have also started making small editions, from the books that I make as part of the larger sculpture, to extend the audience for that work.”

“Last year I had my best year in terms of sales, nearly one-fifth of my income came from sales of the editioned books as well as unique pieces. The rest comes from teaching, lecturing and some design work. I am hoping to shift the balance in the next few years to derive more income from the sale of my art.”

**Marketing**

“Marketing is another matter, although I have been steadily exhibiting since 1990 and by doing that I have built an audience for my work. I have also been fortunate to have had several articles written about my work in the past five years and that has been great. All sales until the past two years have been through friends and personal contacts. I did my first artist’s book fair in 2002 (Pyramid Atlantic), sharing a table with a large group of artists.”

Q. What do you feel is the most difficult aspect of marketing your work?

“Actually selling. Making appointments, and selling the work. I have been very fortunate to have work included in many exhibitions and received press which is also very important to marketing and building an audience.”

Schaer has attended three artist’s book fairs/events in the last 12 months: “Bookfest, ARLIS, and the Pyramid Atlantic Artist’s Book Fair. I also did a general craft fair this Christmas and it was a disaster - too many education people who didn’t understand the work, also it was in a very conservative part of New York; Wall Street, the financial area. It was an interesting opportunity that cost me dearly in terms of time, but not so much in terms of money (the tables were subsidised and very inexpensive).”

“In the book fairs, I have so far covered my expenses and then some, but it’s also a way to generate publicity and meet people who are interested in artists’ books in general and my work in particular.”

“I don’t see selling myself or through a dealer as an either/or situation. I have the kind of personality where I think it is fun (for short periods of time) so it’s not a problem. I like meeting people, showing my work and talking about my work. But I am also working with a dealer who is really travelling a lot and taking the work around.
to a lot of places I wouldn't be able to get to, and, so far has been excellent. He is very honourable and I can't be everywhere. I also want and need more time in the studio to actually work! I think you have to have multiple outlets for the work, and I would like to find a couple of other dealers in other countries and in other parts of the US.”

“I don't feel that meeting the people who purchase my work influences my creative production, if it did, I would stop making unique pieces, but they are still what I like best. It's been interesting though, and perhaps through my own experiences with printmaking and print exchanges, that I've pushed myself to expand my work to include editions. I have realised that doing editioned work and unique work is not mutually exclusive and can work in hand in hand to get my 'vision' out there.”

“Everything you do to get out makes a difference and creates opportunities. At first they are not readily apparent, they can become clear, but sometimes not. But yes, things happen if you put yourself out there. I think the thing that is most important is to stay true to your vision and then figure out where it fits in, I have to make work that makes sense for me.”

“It's been a long process - but I am just starting to figure out ways to market my work. There are private collectors, but also there are university and institutional collections. I have had great feedback and advice from other artist friends in the field (not that I have always listened to them).”

Schaer has approached collections by all methods. “Last year, after doing the ARLIS fair (Art Librarians of North America), I made a catalogue of my work, and sent it to everyone who has been interested in my work. Not every contact is successful but, of the catalogue which I made in June (and reprinted in the fall) two of the small editions (selling for $100 and under) are now completely sold out, I sold one of the larger editioned pieces (selling for $700) and two of the unique pieces, which both sold for $1000 and over. They sold both from me directly, and through the dealer.”

“I think it takes a long time to generate sales, especially of higher end items, and like everything, it is based on relationships, which take time to develop. For example, I showed my work to a University with a very specific collection focus, at the request of the collections librarian who was interested in my work, in the fall of 2003. He saw me at an artist’s book fair in spring 2004 and that reminded him he wanted to acquire a book before he went on sabbatical. He did.”

“I need to be better about this - doing research and making cold calls - it terrifies me. I have to date, approached institutions where I have a contact, and often they have replied and are interested in my work. It is one of my goals to do more researching of institutions and make more calls and sales appointments.”

“I have an email list I send out for info on all publications. I will make sales sheets for the new editioned books and send them out to institutions that have expressed an interest. One funny thing I have found is that, especially for unique pieces, making a box to house the work, makes it much easier for institutions, universities, etc. to acquire these sort of quirky unique one of a kind books.”

“I am coming to think the best way to sell books is to get them into peoples' hands-in person. I have had responses to mail, and the catalogue - and I think these are very important. But you have to follow up and go see people, both at art fairs and by appointments.”

**ARTIST CASE STUDY 20**

Lucy May Schofield, Manchester, UK

Schofield graduated from LCC’s BA Hons, Book Arts and Crafts degree course in 2002. She has been making artists’ books since 2000, and marketing them since 2002.

Schofield has published around 20 editions since 2000, with two editions made in the last 12 months alongside many one-off works. She is part of the Cat's Me-Ow Press formed with three other graduates from LCC in 2002.

Her large editions can be in print runs of up to 1000, and are stocked around the country, with her more unique pieces shown at artist's book fairs and exhibition venues. Making and selling her artworks is her main source of income.

From 2004 – 2005, Schofield has made six editions of 1000 miniature books, sold via national outlets (c.20) all based on the theme of love, secrets and romance. The works stemmed from her first edition of books; 100 books in 100 days; 100 unique works made over a 100-day period.

She also makes individual and one-off pieces for exhibitions and book fairs, and commissioned pieces for private buyers.
Production and Marketing

The most difficult aspect of marketing work for Schofield has been publicising new works quickly enough and letting everyone know what is new, and what is ready for production.

From May 2004 - May 2005 Schofield has attended the following book fairs as part of the Cat's Me-Ow Press:
LAB at the ICA, Nov 2004,
Halifax Artist's Book Fair, Dean Clough Galleries, Halifax, March 2005
Seoul International Artist's Book Fair, Republic of Korea, June 2005

She also markets her books at trade fairs in London, including Pulse and Top Drawer at Earl's Court. These shows are used to launch her larger editions of books to attending clients from retailers and gallery shops.

Perforated Love Notes Lucy May Schofield, 2003

She feels that book fairs and personal interaction with potential purchasers are definitely the best way to sell her work; “No-one can sell your work better than you!” Schofield also feels that the experience increases her confidence in meeting and dealing with purchasers. She would rather sell her work herself, as she knows it is a great opportunity to be able to talk about the work to collectors and buyers without relying on someone else in a shop or gallery, who may not do the work justice.

Meeting the people who purchase her work has influenced Schofield in little ways. She says she has taken on board comments and observations made about some pieces, and has gauged the types of work people respond to most; the types of books and the language used. She finds the first hand feedback very valuable.

Meeting potential purchasers and collectors at book fairs and events has given her some good opportunities including: exhibitions at Platform Gallery, Clitheroe; Curve Gallery, Sheffield; Mead Gallery, Norwich and the Crafts Council Gallery shop in London. These were all the result of meeting and talking to the organisers at events and exhibitions she has taken part in.

Schofield is always looking out for ways to market her work. She talks a lot to other artists and makers. She always appreciates that people she meets could be potential buyers, or help to spread the word about what she does.

Her basic pricing structures always take into account the market she is aiming at, and the price of the editions in relation to the edition size. Each edition is priced according to the cost of materials, printing, production time, and methods used. She also takes into account the target audience and the outlets where the work will be stocked, i.e. the higher and lower ends of the market.

Initially she contacted as many collections as possible to gauge the interest in the type of work she makes. She doesn't keep collections up to date about her work through the post as she assumes they will be at the main artist’s book events she attends, but she sends private view invitations for her own exhibitions to both private and institutional collectors and has had sales as a result of this.

ARTIST CASE STUDY 21
Chris Taylor, Wild Pansy Press, Leeds, UK

Chris Taylor has been making artists’ books, mostly in small to medium editions, for 12 years, with four editions published in the last 12 months. He has his own imprint Wild Pansy Press, and also makes collaborative artists’ books and catalogues with artists, galleries and institutions. He also lectures in Fine Art at the University of Leeds and is co-organiser (with John McDowall) of the annual artist’s book fair at Dean Clough galleries, Halifax.

The most difficult aspect of marketing his work is finding the time. He has organised, and shown his work at Halifax Artist's Book Fair in the last 12 months and finds this and personal interaction are the best ways to sell his work, although he would prefer to sell through an intermediary “because I hate selling – I’d rather give the books away.”

He finds ways to market his work through networking and feels the advice that would have helped him when starting out, would be to focus on North America.

For production costs “a number of books have had ACE funding and been given away/exchanged as part of exhibition programmes.” He would like to see more available “information for graduates on publishing, ISBNs, artist’s book fairs etc.”
ARTIST CASE STUDY 22
Ian Tyson, ed.it, St Roman de Malegarde, France

Ian Tyson has been making and marketing artists’ books for 35 years. He has produced over 100 editions, with 3 made in the last 12 months. He publishes under his own imprint ed.it (since 1995) and previously as Tetrad Press. He collaborates with writers and other artists, including Julia Farrer under the Partworks imprint. His books are “geometric constructivism with a hint of romantic minimalism.”

For Tyson, the most difficult aspect of marketing is “finding enough people willing to buy.” He has attended two artist’s book fairs in France in the last 12 months: Pays Pasage in St Yrieix-la-Perche and Atelier Vis-à-vis in Marseille. He prefers to sell through an intermediary, as they are more objective about the work, but also enjoys meeting potential purchasers.

He finds out marketing strategies from other artists. He has sold work to collections through contacting them, but not in person. He does keep them up to date with new works. He feels: “it would help if there were more serious artist’s book dealers willing to show and disseminate information about books.”

ARTIST CASE STUDY 23
<usus> Uta Schneider and Ulrike Stoltz, Offenbach am main, Germany
www.boatbook.de

Uta Schneider and Ulrike Stoltz have been making artists’ books for 20 years, collaborating under the imprint Unica T from 1986-2001, and as <usus> since 2001. Their work consists of “bookworks, small editions and one-offs, all printing techniques available to us (mainly letterpress and digital) plus drawings, installations (and music: Ulrike Stoltz).” They each have additional careers in this field.

Q. Has meeting potential purchasers or collectors given you any opportunities you may not have had otherwise?

“Yes: the careers we have made in the book world (Uta Schneider: managing director of Stiftung Buchkunst; Ulrike Stoltz: professor for typography) would not have been possible without our independent artwork. But these opportunities never came directly: it was more due to the phenomenon of getting known; and also because we did not make any compromises in our artwork.”

On any advice that would have helped when they first started out: "Well, 20 years ago making artists’ books, or starting to make them, was like an expedition into an unknown territory! We went to the International Frankfurt Book Fair with the idea that someone would publish our books – and had to learn that we would have to be our own publishers. That’s where we learned most (from customers and collectors as well as from colleagues).”
Pricing their work is "always very intuitive ... when something sells fast, this could indicate that it is too "cheap", but on the other hand: reducing the price of a work does not mean it will sell easier. It also depends on the country where you want to sell. Also we don’t think that a book should be more expensive just because it is letterpress printed! We strongly think that the price for a book should have something to do with the contents (being new and original, like any good art!) – and not with the technique of printing."

They approach collections by letter, phone or e-mail to make a date, then visit, which is usually successful. "They don’t necessarily buy everything we show, but most of the time they buy something. The reason for not buying seems to be influenced by the personal taste of the curator/librarian or by the general direction of the collection (which we do not always know before the meeting)."

They would like to keep collectors up to date with information on new publications "but that kind of work is another full time job, which we don’t always find the time to do on top of everything else. We think we have a good approach in general and lots of ideas of what else we could do – the main problem is time, time, time ... marketing is a professional job that requires special skills and a special attitude – both different from those you have to have as an artist."

"We would like to know whether it is actually possible to make a living just from artists’ books. We doubt it. Most people we know make books PLUS something else: like other art work, printing for other people, graphic design, teaching, taxi driving, etc. or they have another type of income, like renting a house/apartment they own to someone else; or living from their husband's or wife's income, or having inherited enough money from their parents... so it would be interesting to know."

ARTIST CASE STUDY 24
Wendy Lockwood, Dewsbury, UK

Wendy Lockwood graduated in 2004, and has been making artists’ books for 4 years. She uses her own PC, with programmes such as Illustrator™ and Photoshop™ and an ink jet printer to print out her own publications. Lockwood also makes sculptural, altered books from paperback novels.

Production and Marketing

Lockwood has attended one artist’s book fair in the last year, at Dean Clough Galleries, Halifax. She has also sent out promotional material on her books, which has resulted in the offer of an exhibition. Her main sources of ideas for marketing her work have been through the Artist’s Book Yearbook and the BALTIC exhibition catalogue.

Lockwood studied marketing and business modules as part of her degree in fine art, but feels that students have to know how to promote themselves. She has tried to formulate a pricing structure for her books, which are mostly unique, but having broken down her costs and then added an estimate for personal time at 10.00 an hour, the prices became far too high. She has since thought that that this system of including her time resulted in unrealistic prices.

She has not approached any collections yet but has received some contact as a result of showing her work. The pricing problem is something she would like to see addressed in this survey.