

**Terms of Reference  
of the proposed  
National Scholarly Book Publishers' Forum (NSBPF)  
of South Africa**

**Background Considerations and Policy Environment**

**[1]** The ASSAf Report on research publishing in South Africa, published in March 2006, developed ten evidence-based recommendations, which the Academy's Council has committed itself to implementing if at all possible, working in every case with key stakeholder partners. As a first step, the ASSAf Council established a Committee on Scholarly Publishing in South Africa (CSPISA), as well as a Scholarly Publishing Unit (SPU) within the ASSAf office, to ensure that the Academy's Council is well advised on the optimum ways of implementing the Recommendations in the Report, and to ensure that the necessary programme of activities is properly serviced and accountably run within set budgets.

**[2]** The Academy released its second Report on 'Scholarly Books: their Production, Use and Evaluation in South Africa Today' in September, 2009. The Report makes 11 Recommendations, summarised as follows:

The Panel recommended that:

1. the publishing (or co-publishing) of high-quality scholarly books (monographs and collected works) in South Africa and elsewhere should be strongly encouraged and supported because of the contributions that the kinds of "deep" scholarship made possible by such publications can render to building the reputation and increasing the impact of the research system of the country. By the same token, writing books or contributing to collected works that are published by prominent publishers elsewhere is manifestly also to be encouraged and supported.
2. a national Scholarly Book Publishers' Forum should be established under the auspices of the Academy as a "companion" to the already existing National Scholarly Editors' Forum relating to journals published in South Africa.
3. some form of organised and sustainable national book publishing support system be established to create a climate in which book-publishing decisions can be freed of purely commercial considerations. This could be linked to a system of regionalised and/or partially centralised consortia infrastructure to support the publishing of scholarly books and journals, which could include components for distribution and logistical infrastructure, co-publishing or other platforms for international marketing and promotion, and a national internet platform for Open Access publications. Alignment with library and repository functions at institutional and other levels could enhance the development of new kinds of organisations centrally focused on the core mission of scholarship.

4. the principle of maximising open access, already recommended by the Academy for scholarly journals, be extended as far as possible (and with careful attention to sustainable business models) to books published (or co-published) in South Africa, with the adoption of formats and technology platforms compatible with bibliometric requirements such as citation indexing and information-rich online features.

5. attempts should be made to obtain the agreement of book publishers in South Africa to follow a general quality assurance system captured as guidelines based on the recommendations contained in this Report. This should be based on the typology of scholarly books proposed in Chapter 5 of this Report, and involve a clear separation of the complex collecting/editing functions from those of independent, individual review of free-standing book chapters by appropriate peers, both distinct in turn from commercial decision-making as to publishing particular works in the marketplace. This could be linked to a form of Service-level Agreement to which publishers would be required to adhere should they wish to benefit from the above-proposed subsidy system (see point 3 above), or from the present research outputs accreditation model.

6. apart from the requirement for independent peer review, and the application of the typological criteria proposed below, public policy in respect of the publication of scholarly books should also be based on an additional set of parameters:

- No systematic distinction should be made between scholarly books published or co-published in South Africa and those published in foreign countries.
- Doctoral dissertations should not be categorised as “scholarly books” unless they fully conform to one of the type categories proposed in Chapter 5;
- ‘Advanced textbooks’ or ‘professional handbooks’ should also not be categorised as scholarly books unless they fully conform to one of these type categories;
- General (or undergraduate) textbooks should not be regarded as scholarly books.
- The minimum size/scope of a scholarly book should be expressed in words and not in (final printed) pages; a threshold of 60 000 words is proposed, subject to the discretion of legitimately identifying exceptions where an extended analysis or argument and its evidential development has been achieved in a smaller word-frame.
- The weighting of a book relative to a journal article should be upgraded, to regard an entire book of at least 180 000 words as having a value 10 times that of a single journal article, one of 120 000 words as having 7.5 times that value, and 60 000, five times, in proper recognition of the special scholarly contribution of book-based publications that conform to one of the four proposed types.
- The rules of fractional apportionment of earned sub-units to the (South African) institutions of contributing authors should be applied as for journal articles.
- The approach to scholarly books taken in this Report could usefully be taken as a point of departure in any approach to the evaluation of conference proceedings.



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7. the editors of South African journals should endeavour to commission post-publication (peer) reviews of any scholarly books published in their areas of focus in South Africa, as soon as possible after their publication.

8. four categories of scholarly books/collected works should be regarded as being both valid and important part of the (scholarly) "literature", in terms of best practice amongst researchers and scholars, and national policies such as the Department of Education's accreditation system of research outputs produced by education institutions, and the criteria for grant-making by the National Research Foundation:

- An extensive and scholarly treatment of a topic by one or more (few) scholars, largely comprising significant and original (own) research, embedded in relevant literature;
- An extensive scholarly exposition by one or more (few) scholars of the available literature on a topic, from a position of demonstrable authority, which makes a significant conceptual or empirical synthesis that advances scholarship;
- A collected work (book), assembled by one or more (usually many) scholars in a field(s) or group of related fields, which as a planned group of individually peer-reviewed chapters by appropriately qualified authors generates a new conceptual synthesis that advances scholarship; and
- A collective work (book), assembled by one or more (usually many) scholars in a number of related fields, in which the individual authors have noted and reviewed each other's chapters and adapted their contributions to generate a new conceptual synthesis that significantly advances scholarship.

9. the possibly beneficial effects of the prescribed and unprescribed use of scholarly books in both under- and postgraduate teaching and learning be studied, and the lessons learnt applied in general higher educational practice.

10. a wide-ranging project be initiated by the national Department of Education and the provincial education authorities that will sharply increase the exposure of teachers, teachers-in-training and learners to locally published scholarly books that present some of the country's foremost scientific work in accessible form, and are effectively linked to the media.

11. the findings and recommendations contained in this Report be presented to key stakeholders in a series of consultative workshops, and that the outcomes and the impact of the publication of the Report be evaluated in four years' time.

**[3]** At a meeting of scholarly publishers and ASSAf representatives held during the meetings of the Publishers' Association of South Africa in Cape Town on 21 February 2011, after in principle support of this initiative it was agreed that draft Terms of Reference for a National Scholarly Book Publishers' Forum should be drawn up by the Academy and circulated for comment to all scholarly publishers. The broad mandate was to include the following:

- The Forum should concentrate on matters common to the objectives of the scholarly publishers and the Academy, maximising the facilitatory capacity of the latter in achieving changes in public policy and its mission to improve the quality, quantity and impact of scholarly book publishing in and from South Africa.
- The Forum articulates proposals and recommendations with the assistance of the Academy, which will take them forward to relevant stakeholders.
- The Forum should cooperate closely with the Publishers' Association of South Africa (PASA) and its relevant section(s).



- The Forum should promote the adoption of a set of guidelines for best practice in editing and peer reviewing for monographs and collected works.
- The Forum should foster the integration of policy and practice in all forms of academic publishing.

### **Operating principles of the Forum**

**[4]** Consistent with the agreed notion of mutual accountability and transparency, effective two-way communication channels will be used to ensure that every member scholarly publisher is kept fully informed at all times of policy and other developments known to the Academy, and in turn, scholarly publishers, both individually and collectively, will bring their concerns to this Forum for debate and possible action.

**[5]** ASSAf will be vested with the responsibility to maintain and sustain the Forum, and to act on its behalf as mandated by the membership, provided such action is in line with its own Statute and mission, as generally overseen by its governing Council.

**[6]** The costs of running the Forum will be incurred from the budget of ASSAf which will ensure effective project management and servicing of the Forum. Physical attendance by Forum members of annual or other meetings will, however, not be funded in terms of either travel and/or accommodation. The members should be given adequate notice of meetings so that they can be budgeted for in advance.

**[7]** The governance of the Forum will comprise an Executive Committee chaired by the chairperson of the ASSAf Committee on Scholarly Publishing in South Africa (CSPiSA), the Director of ASSAf's Scholarly Publishing Programme, and three Publishers' representatives elected by nomination and secret ballot amongst the Forum members.

### **Activities to Support the Forum**

**[8]** The Academy will, after consultation with the Forum members, among other activities:

- (i) undertake or commission studies on matters of interest to the Forum;
- (ii) issue communiqués and public statements on issues of concern to the Forum;
- (iii) organise and hold workshops or develop policy advice on behalf of the Forum;
- (iv) investigate systemic aspects of scholarly book publishing, especially the possibility of a 'national scholarly book publishing fund';
- (v) develop a database of scholarly publishers in South Africa, and other information resources to document and study the system;
- (vi) consider guidelines for best practice in peer review and other aspects of quality assurance that will enhance the quality, impact and dissemination of South African scholarly books; and
- (vii) co-operate with institutions and organisations that have objectives similar to those of the Forum.

### **Meetings**

**[9]** The Academy shall at least once a year convene a meeting of the Forum to discuss progress in achieving objectives. A special meeting of the Forum may be called if no fewer than five members jointly request such a meeting. All Forum members will be invited to attend annual or special meetings, of which notice of at least two months shall be given and a draft agenda



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supplied, with a request for further items from the membership. All Forum members will receive reports/aides mémoire on all of these meetings.

**[10]** Each meeting shall be chaired by the Chairperson or acting Chairperson of the CSPiSA of the Academy, and organised by the Executive Committee.

**[11]** The quorum for a meeting of the Forum shall be 50% of the Membership; if there is no quorum at the beginning of a meeting, the members attending it may resolve to proceed with the agenda, and to circulate their deliberations and recommendations to the full membership for ratification.

**[12]** Resolutions of the Forum will be taken by a show of hands, if at least two-thirds of those attending a meeting are in support of a proposal or motion, provided there is a quorum. Minutes will be prepared within 21 days after a meeting and distributed to all Forum members; those who attended the meeting will be asked to confirm the accuracy or otherwise of the draft minutes within a further period of 21 days, in which process the absence of a negative response will be taken as assent.

### **Mission Statement**

**[13]** The National Scholarly Book Publishers' Forum will be a significant new stakeholder in the South African National System of Innovation (NSI), with a voice that helps shape policy and promotes excellence and high visibility of the country's research activities through the promotion of scholarly book publishing in and from the country.

### **Objectives**

**[14]** The objectives of the National Scholarly Book Publishers' Forum will be generally to support and promote high-quality scholarly book publishing in South Africa, and especially to assist in the efforts of the Academy bringing about:

- (i) the establishment of a set of parameters for the promotion of scholarly books, based on the findings of the ASSAf report (see clause 2) and further developments;
- (ii) an improved mechanism for the accreditation by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) of scholarly books or individual chapters in such books (collected works);
- (iii) the development of a new generation of excellent, publishing scholars;
- (iv) to enhance the visibility of scholarly SA books, and to promote collaboration with scholars everywhere, through the expansion of electronic platforms where appropriate (possibly but not necessarily including an expansion of Open Access publishing);
- (v) the establishment of sustainable business models, amongst others in relation to Open Access publishing;
- (vi) a sustainable national system of harvesting scholarly books in institutional repositories;
- (vii) sustainable, appropriate and transparent subsidisation mechanisms of high-quality scholarly books and collected works in South Africa; and
- (viii) information systems about scholarly publishing that are useful in planning and accessible by all.



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## Membership

**[15]** Membership of the Forum is provisionally open to current publishers or equivalent, of scholarly books published in South Africa. Membership will be renewed annually on receipt of confirmation of continuation, and of relevant current contact details needed to maintain the Forum network and database. There will be no subscription fee as long as ASSAf has the funds to maintain the Forum. Member publishers may assign their delegates to attend Forum meetings.

**[16]** Member publishers may nominate one member to serve on the CSPiSA. Nominees proposed by them, are eligible for selection by the Academy Council to serve on the Committee. The terms of office of individual members will be three years.

**[17]** Members of the ASSAf CSPiSA will be given ex-officio observer status of the Forum, while academic publishers who do not publish scholarly books and institutional librarians may be given observer status at general meetings of the Forum, at the discretion of the Executive Committee.

**[18]** The Forum shall be maintained while a majority of its members support its continuation, as tested by a resolution taken at each annual or special meeting, provided there is a quorum.

[Modelled on the existing Terms of Reference of the National Scholarly Editors' Forum set up by ASSAf in 2006.]



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