THE PROJECT

a Publishing Scotland initiative

supporting the development of small independent publishers in Scotland

DAVID PIRNIE  and MARION SINCLAIR

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FOREWORD

Marion Sinclair
chief executive | Publishing Scotland
FOREWORD

Publishing Scotland is committed to supporting the development of skills and business in the book publishing sector in Scotland and so I am delighted to be contributing a foreword to this report on the Company Development Project - a project which sits squarely with our aims and one which, we hope, has real potential for transferability across companies and sectors. The need to innovate, to keep up with changes in the sector, and to continually improve publishing practice, is not going to go away anytime soon, and is at the heart of a company’s ability to sustain itself through difficult times.

The idea for the Project came about when we sat down to think about the size and scale of the publishing sector in Scotland and what we could do to stimulate growth and confidence among independent publishing companies who were being faced with an industry in transition. The traditional print-based model which had been around for over 500 years is being challenged by the advent of new, mainly digital, technologies.

We recognised at the time that a skills gap was growing and that, given the small to medium size companies who make up the bulk of the Publishing Scotland membership, the interventions had to fit the profile of that membership. Training is one response and most see it as fairly critical to business competitiveness but a one-day or one-week training course is necessarily limited in its scope and so the idea came about for a longer-term programme in which businesses, who are best placed to understand their own business and training needs, could apply to be supported and mentored through the next stage of their development.

The idea seemed like a good one - learning on the job has proved to be very effective - and although it wasn’t an original idea, we felt it needed some real direction and a strong steer from a variety of external sources. We engaged David Pirnie of pmnie limited to help develop that initial sketchy idea and a steering group was assembled - Suzanne Kavanagh and Alasdair Smith of Creative Skillset, Professor Alistair Mc Cleery of Edinburgh Napier University, Professor Claire Squires of Stirling University, Gavin Wallace of Creative Scotland, and Martin Mc Call of CPI, the printers. Our first acknowledgement goes to them all for their early encouragement and advice.

With a programme devised and set up, the call for applications followed. A willingness to put one’s company forward to be scrutinised for six months was a definite advantage. Seven companies signed up - the Magnificent 7, as someone dubbed them - and a number of advisors were recruited. The matching of advisors with the companies was one of the most crucial steps we undertook. Six months can go by very quickly and a mistake in the matching process would have been difficult to recover, given that a set period of six months had been set aside by the companies and by David Pirnie, for a programme of workshops to complement the one-to-one advice.

The advisors were drawn from all round the publishing process, and together with David, were invaluable in maintaining the key contact with the companies. Our third and by no means least set of acknowledgements go to the advisors: Willie Anderson; Will Atkinson; Donald Boyd; Peter Collingridge; Ron Grosset; Jim Mc Call; Martin Redfern; Jenny Todd. Brief biographies on each of them are included in the case studies section. Throughout the duration of the project they all exhibited wisdom, openness and a genuine desire to help. These attributes are not rare in the publishing business - a very people business - but the Project took up a lot more time that they were being engaged for and that willingness to go beyond the remit was much appreciated by the companies and by David and myself.
The six-month process of the Project was enlightening and productive. Many minds were brought to bear on the issues facing us at present - digital versus print and how any revenue is to be made out of the substitution of one for the other - indeed, is it a substitution or a reaching out to a new audience?; whether it's possible to change your business model midstream in the life cycle of a company; how can costs be further reduced (in a sector of independents operating on stringless shoestrings)?; how can a company persuade and win over a new generation of readers, and how to 'rev up' a traditional marketing operation to fit online retailing direct to the customer. All of these and many more were explored, debated and discussed between advisors and companies and at the three workshops held in Edinburgh.

Our final round of thanks go to Creative Scotland for their support throughout and through their part-funding of Publishing Scotland, to CPI, the printers, for their sponsorship of the Project, and to David Pirnie himself who went the extra mile (and how...) in his meticulous and methodical steering of the Project. My personal thanks go to him for a great learning experience.

We face plenty of challenges across our wide publishing spectrum but we hope and believe that the knowledge, advice and friendships gained during this process will serve as a catalyst for our companies and for the health of our sector for the future.

Marion Sinclair
Chief Executive
Publishing Scotland
THE PROJECT

introduction & background

David Pirnie
programme manager | THE PROJECT
INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Introduction

The Project was a six-month development programme, launched in June 2011, which ran from September 2011 to April 2012. An initiative of Publishing Scotland and its chief executive, Marion Sinclair, the project was created specifically for small, independent publishers in Scotland. Through a personalised programme, custom-designed in collaboration with each of the 7 publishers who took part, the Project supported each publisher to review, develop and pursue a business-led initiative that each publisher had themselves selected.

The programme offered by the Project had two main components:

- **Individual mentoring** - by a specially selected team of expert advisors, each of whom was matched up and worked with one publisher for the duration of the Project; in some instances, and depending on need, a publisher might have two or more advisors or was applied to more than one publisher in the group of 7.

- **Workshops** - a series of three workshops, on publishing-business themes, bringing all 7 publishers and their advisors together for intensive one-day events, involving contributions by a wide range of invited specialists, as well as presentations by advisors (within their own fields of specialist expertise).

This report has been written to share the experience of the Project, to explain why it was designed the way it was, what it actually achieved, and what was learned from the process and the outcome: both overall, and by each of the 7 publishers who took part.

Case studies

At the heart of the report is a series of 7 case studies, one for each of the participating publishers, detailing their reasons for taking part, summarising the development process they went through, and assessing the results they achieved, measured against their individual reasons for taking part. Each case study includes a commentary by the advisor (or advisors) to each publisher on their assessment of the publisher’s business initiative, what they contributed during their interactions with the publisher over the six-months of the Project, concluding with their view on what was achieved, and the medium-term prospects for the publisher they advised.

The case studies are detailed and candid - and there is much to be learned from them, not least the ambition, strength and courage of the publishers involved. Preparation of the case studies was a careful, collaborative and lengthy process, carried out by the Project’s programme manager, David Pirnie, at the end of the Project. This involved taped interviews with each publisher, and separately, their advisor/s; a review of all written notes, reports and recommendations exchanged between each advisor and their publisher over the six month period; and the programme manager’s own notes from work-in-progress discussions with publishers and advisers throughout the six month period.

In each case a copy of their own draft case study was given to each publisher with the invitation to review, revise, amend or correct the text - as all publishers had agreed that the case studies would subsequently be placed in the public domain - in print and on Publishing Scotland’s website. In fact few changes were made by the publishers and what is presented in the case studies has been fully endorsed by the publishers.
An additional insight is provided by a set of 7 video-case studies (available on Publishing Scotland’s website), each on one of the publishers. Ranging from 8 to 14 minutes duration, each video includes a summary on the publisher and their business initiative, and interviews with the publisher and (separately) their advisor on what was done and achieved during the Project.

The Project - a business-led initiative

The Project was, from the start and throughout every aspect of the six-month programme, focused on the business of publishing, rather than what some might consider as its more ‘creative’ aspects: such as selecting and editing manuscripts; book and typographic design, and cover design; relationships with authors.

As Marion Sinclair and David Pirnie worked together (supported by a small industry-focused steering group) during the latter part of 2011 and early 2012 to convert the concept into a deliverable programme, the decision to pursue a business-led approach was continually reinforced by observation and insights into two areas of challenge for the small independent publishers who were the target participants for the Project.

Changes in the publishing industry and the economic environment

Fast moving changes within the publishing industry itself - including the growth of digital publishing (e-books) and the growing number of platforms and devices on which content could be read; the decline of the high street bookshop and intense competition from supermarkets, Amazon and discounting; the growing influence of social media on reader choice and the implications for marketing; and the threatening economic environment and its impacts of society generally, as well as individual readers, publishers and the publishing supply chain.

Capacity: the main challenge for the target group

The thinking behind the design of the Project recognized that capacity was a key issue for the type of publishers who were seen as the main target group. While there is no shortage of ideas and ambition, the capacity of this scale of publishing business to realise them is often inhibited by their resource: most have fewer than ten employees, and sometimes three or less; the nature of publishing requires a quite complex set of skills and knowledge, and not only creative enthusiasm for publishing, but a ‘good eye’ for a manuscript and editorial skill.

The requirements extend well beyond that to include understanding of readers/consumers and markets, how to access and analyse market data, procure print and production by the most economic means, take calculated decisions on agents and distribution, buying and selling rights....and other specific and technical areas of publishing knowledge and skill that publishers need, or can afford to buy-in or out-source. Operating successfully as a publisher also makes demands on the publisher’s business skills (planning, finance, administration, marketing, etc) and success or failure can be the result of a good or bad decision about the type of business model the publisher chooses.

Balancing creative ambition - which usually lies at the heart of an individual’s decision to go into publishing (or any other form of creative industry) - with a sufficiently robust business model (and business skills) capable of sustaining it, is challenging - personally and professionally: especially for a publishing business with very few employees. And then there is the matter of money, and cash flow......and most small independent publishers are, by nature (and circumstance) acutely risk (and investment) averse.

Almost irrespective of their original reason for taking part in the Project, the passage of the Project - as the case studies show - found the issues of business models, strategy and addressing capacity prominent among the topics addressed by publishers and their advisors.
THE PROJECT

An outline of activities

A launch document inviting applications from publisher-members of Publishing Scotland to participate in the project was distributed in June 2011. A copy of the original document is included in the Annex to this report.

The planning and development process - in outline

- A process of initial thinking, developing ideas and testing them (with a steering group) began in 2010, and continued over a period of 9 months before a decision was taken in early 2011 on the likely approach, scope and scale of the final programme.
- Promotion of the concept began with a presentation at Publishing Scotland’s annual conference in February, 2011.
- This was followed by individual discussions with publisher-members of Publishing Scotland who were, broadly speaking, within the target range of the Project: small, independent Scottish publishers.
- A half-day workshop was held at Publishing Scotland’s office in Edinburgh for a group of publishers who had expressed an interest in taking part.
- A background information document (a copy of which is included in the Annex to this report) was made available in June 2011, along with an Application Form (see Annex) - with a closing date of 30th June.
- A specially convened selection panel, drawn from the membership of the steering group met in July and as a result of this process, seven publishers were invited to take part in the Project.
- Publishers were invited to have their initial and informal meeting with their proposed advisors at mutually convenient times from late August, into September.
- Formal project activities began with the first Workshop, held at Publishing Scotland’s offices on 29 September, 2011.

The role of expert advisors

The role of expert adviser was critical to the delivery of the Project, and its success.

Recruitment of expert advisors was a priority during the planning stage alongside profiling and providing a sufficient description of each participating publisher to provide the best prospects of a successful match of need to the range of expert skills and experience available.

We set out to recruit highly experienced industry professionals, favouring those who would bring expertise in more than one field, as well as strategic and business skills. There was no question of imposing advisors on individual publishers, and in each case both the publisher, and the proposed advisor had to confirm (separately) that they felt the relationship would work, before the engagement got underway.

Support to each of the advisors, throughout the Project, was provided by the programme manager. This provided advisors with access to a formal - but usually, informal - sounding board for their own thoughts and ideas. By this means what became clear as ‘recurring issues’ arising during advisor and publisher mentoring sessions could be confidently shared among the wider group of advisors, invariably leading to networking and information exchanges of value to all parties. A key meeting of all of the advisors two months after the Project began. This provided a valuable forum from which everyone gained. It also helped to sharpen the focus of the content of the second workshop of the programme, and make it even more relevant to the by now, better known needs of the 7 publishers.
Subsequently, the progress of the Project continued in two main fields:

- **Individual meetings** between publishers and their advisors over the six month period. Each publisher was allocated (by the Project) four (paid) days of expert advisor time and the schedule of their meetings - and other forms of communication by telephone and email; and the location of meetings - was up to the publisher and advisor to agree between themselves. Reports and copies of recommendations were provided directly to the publisher by their advisor; copies were also provided to project management and separate discussions on progress took place with the publisher and their advisor.

- **Three workshops** (including the workshop on 29 September) were held during the six month period of the Project. Copies of the programmes of all three workshops are included in the Annex.

The workshops

In summary:

- **Workshop 1 - 29 September, 2011**

  This workshop was planned with a focus on the business dimension of publishing and the themes of research (understanding and interpretation) change and investment. The overall focus and these themes reflected aspects of the interests of each of the 7 publishers who took part in the Project. Contributing speakers were seasoned and successful practitioners in publishing research [Reeta Windsor, business development manager UK, BookScan, Nielsen on understanding and interpreting research] and in finance and investment [Donald Boyd, partner head of the media sector, Campbell Dallas, on making investment decisions and the criteria to employ]. Speakers shared information, ideas, principles and practice, and lessons drawn from hard experience - some *more* and some *less* successful; case studies were based on 'real life' examples and the speakers presenting them were the people who dealt with the issues at the time. [Jenny Todd, sales and marketing director, Canongate Books on 'Life after Pi'; Vivian Marr of Oxford University Press on 'the push to digital' at Hodder Education].

Developing the programme for the second workshop

Ideas for the content of second workshop arose out of a meeting held in November 2011 attended by the entire team of expert advisors. The meeting discussed issues that advisors reported as arising frequently during sessions with their publishers. The final programme for the second workshop reflects the team’s shared conclusions about what would be of most use - strategically and also practically - to the smaller independent publisher in 2012... which everyone agreed would be an especially 'testing' year. It was also agreed that several of the advisors should present sessions at the workshop in which they had a specialist interest, knowledge and expertise. This brought many additional benefits, including: giving all seven publishers direct access to *all* of the advisors - in some instances resulting in additional sources of advice and support to that provided by their original advisor.

- **Workshop 2 - 26 January, 2012**

  The programme for this workshop focused on addressing the increasingly challenging commercial environment facing all in the publishing industry - equally testing for the small and medium business, as well as the largest of the conglomerates.
In summary, the workshop covered the following topics.

- The programme begins with a sharp look at squaring up to the anticipated challenges of 2012 with discussion of some tried, tested and practical ‘tools’ for managing business risk [Marion Sinclair and Martin McCall, head of digital content, CPI].
- The book chain comprises a series of relationships which are crucial to every publishing outcome - never more important than now with the ever more complex relationships, choices and challenges facing the small publisher in 2012.[James McCall, publishing consultant]
- Marketing was a strong theme throughout the programme and this session put the customer at the heart of the business - and offered structured guidance on practical, efficient and effective ways of segmenting and targeting customer groups.[Martin Redfern, publishing consultant]
- E-books and the digitisation of content have created new opportunities for publishers and pose difficulties for their traditional route to the reader - their customer: how to address this challenge [William Anderson, publishing consultant].
- There are - as Stanley Unwin, of George Allen and Sons once wrote - far too many worthless books published and insufficient sales; this session presents a practical model to help determine a print run, with the aim of reducing idle inventory and reduce stock risk. [Ron Grosset, managing director, Waverley Books]
- Is it sensible, or even feasible, for a small, or even very small independent publisher to consider recruiting a non-executive director.....and what might they contribute, adding value, insights and contacts, and editorially? [Marion Sinclair, David Pirnie and Philip Walters, formerly a senior publisher and now a non-executive director of several successful publishing businesses]
- What are the top three or four 'big issues' facing the publishing industry in 2012, and what can the small independent publisher do about it? Perspectives from two industry leaders. [Will Atkinson, sales and marketing director, Faber, and Jenny Todd, head of sales and marketing, Canongate Books]
- Also an invitation to everyone attending - participants and guest speakers: The one that got away - 'The book I wish I'd published, and why... and why I didn't' - a fast round-table sharing of experiences. Each participating publisher - including publisher-speakers - is invited to share a brief anecdote with the entire group....

**Workshop 3 - 25 April, 2012**

The third and final workshop in the series took place towards the end of The Project. Most of the planned one-to-one sessions between participating publishers and their advisors had been completed. The process of preparing case studies was underway, reviewing the progress of each publisher against their original business objectives for participating in The Project.

The workshop took place only a week after the end of the London Book Fair during which most of the publishers involved with The Project had a presence on the Publishing Scotland group stand and a short presentation was given on some of the main themes and messages gathered during the Fair [David Pirnie, project manager]. Opportunities arose during the course of the workshop (informally as well as during working sessions) for discussion of impressions, trends and the apparent health of the publishing sector.

Three headline themes were covered during Workshop, and once again these were presented by an experienced and very practical group of invited speakers, all of whom took a strongly business-led approach.
Extending your digital reach explored 4 strands of this key field in current development: using social media to engage with audiences [Sara Hunt, publisher, Saraband]; approaches to online marketing and enriching the content of marketing campaigns [Maurice Smith, the Value Innovators]; online publishing and profitably taking content and intellectual property online [Rob Nichols, marketing and digital director, Constable & Robinson]; and addressing the challenge of channelling content - with insights into the genesis and experience of Canongate TV [Cate Cannon, head of marketing and digital content, Canongate Books].

The second main theme invited publishers to consider the question: Are we making the most of the media, and specifically the continuing relevance of print media and public relations? [Carlos Alba, Carlos Alba Media]. And how does it look from the side of the books editor who is daily / weekly faced with the output of press and PR people, and the promotional efforts of publishers and authors...on what basis do they select what to feature and what to review? [David Robinson, Books Editor, The Scotsman and Scotland on Sunday.]

In some cases, 'coming close', but none of the seven participating publishers has yet passed the £1 million turnover mark. But all are planning for growth and recognize that investment (perhaps from external sources) may be required at some point. Building your business...but where will the money come from? was the third theme, and provided the opportunity for one of the UK's major banks to share its thoughts on funding options.[Andrew Clark Hutchison, Relationship Director, Lloyds Bank].

As this was the final workshop of the Project, each of the seven publishers was invited to make a short presentation to their group (including invited guests and speakers on: What we do best - highlighting what they each think is most distinctive about what their publishing business does, and what they feel most proud of. They were also invited to share what they each felt they - and their publishing business had gained most from their involvement in The Project. A lively and thought-provoking conclusion, during which the publishers themselves proposed a title for their group: the Magnificent Seven.

What was learned...and what was achieved?

This is the subject of the final chapter of this report. In it we claim, with confidence, that there is strong evidence of achievement by each of the seven publishers who took part in the Project, supported by what they themselves think (as presented in the case studies) and in the opinions of their advisors.

- In the final chapter we re-examine each stage of the planning and delivery process, and their components, and ask where there are useful lessons that can be learned from the overall experience. We identify and discuss 7 specific areas:
  1. Establishing the case for the initiative
  2. Clarity of purpose
  3. Recruitment of participants
  4. Recruitment of advisors
  5. Matching publisher and advisors
  6. Providing a clear structure for the programme
  7. Workshops

- Once the project was underway, what lessons are there to be learned? We identify and discuss 3:
  1. The importance of monitoring - throughout the duration of the Project
  2. Employing the minimum of bureaucracy
  3. Communication and interaction among advisors
• **Transferability...?**
  
  Is the development support model of the Project (developed for publishers) potentially transferable to another creative industry? And can anything be learned from close observation of the 7 publishers who took part (both their personal and professional qualities) that might help guide in the selection of leaders from other creative industries who might benefit from similar programme? We think there are, and identify 5 characteristics.

• **Value for money?**
  
  Did the Project represent (good) value for money to each of the three investors who made it possible:

  **The 7 publishers** who each paid a fee of £1,500 to take part, and also met all of their own costs of participation which, in most cases more than doubled the basic cost of the fee

  **Creative Scotland**, the major public sector funder, interested not only in supporting the publishing sector, but also eager to observe the effectiveness of this new model of support for a creative industry - did their investment represent 'good value' for money?

  **CPI Books** - a well established international printing company who generously contributed direct financial sponsorship?

  The views of all three 'investors' on the value for money represented by the Project is presented in the final chapter - in their own words.

...and finally:

**The implications for Publishing Scotland itself?**

According to Marion Sinclair, chief executive of Publishing Scotland, the process has provided the organisation *'with much food for thought'...and 'an instructive, up-to-date and clear set of lessons in how best to develop small publishing companies.'*

This line of thinking is explored in her remarks in the final chapter of the report, in which she identifies 5 strands that are of particular importance to Publishing Scotland’s future thinking about this area of work, including, and notably, the need to:

  '...focus more of our efforts on fostering and encouraging business and finance skills.'

**In this report**

The remainder of this report is in two main sections, followed by an Annex.

• **The Case Studies** - the core of the report, containing detailed cases studies on each of the 7 publishers, presented in alphabetical order.

• **Reflections** - what has been achieved? | What has been learned - an exploration of themes and issues, with some guidelines and recommendations

• **Annex** - this contains the following items: a note on the set of 7 video case studies that accompany this review of the project | a copy of the original launch document issued to publishers in June 2011 | A copy of the application form which publishers were required to complete - and which was used in the selection of the 7 publishers | Workshops - the programme for all three workshops.
Case Study

Agnes Rennie
publisher | Acair Limited

Jenny Todd
advisor | sales & marketing director
Canongate Books
ACAIR LIMITED

In summary: the publisher | the business initiative | the result

About Acair

- Business name: Acair Limited
- Year established: 1977
- Legal status: Company limited by guarantee
- Main location: Stornoway, Isle of Lewis
- Ownership: Board of Directors appoint the manager
- Type of Books: Children’s Gaelic; fiction and non-fiction in Gaelic and English; history, environment; Gaelic language

About the business initiative

- Our project idea was focused on the desire to benchmark ourselves against other independents who started out small but have since grown.
- We wanted to look at differing models for selling fiction, across editorial, rights and contracts, distribution and marketing.
- We wanted to look at where our priorities should lie and the best way to generate income and possibly finance.
- We wanted to develop our web-site as a ‘shop’.

About the result

THE PUBLISHER

Agnes Rennie, publisher, Acair Ltd

Our experience of the Project, which came at a very important time for our business, has been very positive and on several different levels. It helped clarify for us some things we thought we had to do — for example, re-building the web-site - but also not to do some of the things that we had previously considered a priority. For example, developing our web-site to act as a shop; we do expect to sell from it, but now this will not be its primary purpose. Instinctively we knew we were behind in our use of social media – but it turned out that we were not all that much out of step, compared with other publishers. It was hugely encouraging to learn from other people, and that has been another real benefit of the Project, hearing from other people who operate on a similar level. Discussion of production and print runs, for example: we had not appreciated how much of an issue this was for all of the publishers taking part in the project; we gained much reassurance from what we learned about this topic. Acair’s experience of the Project was been a revelation and provided us with much encouragement. The Board has gained a new impetus. The staff team is very positive, with a new vitality. We have all gained a different perspective.

THE ADVISOR

Jenny Todd, sales and marketing director, Canongate Books

Acair came into this process willingly and with a really positive attitude and it is clear that they think what they have gained through the Project has provided them with a real shot in the arm. They have made great progress and what they now need to do is to keep the momentum going. The business needed some commercial shaping and the process of the Project has helped with this. Now they can move forward. The team has gained an enhanced skills set. The main building blocks are in now in place: the quality of the list and the dedication, passion and talent of the team. What they were not particularly good at was shouting about what they had to offer. They now know what to do about that. Acair’s future development will be an evolving process, and there is no end point to that. But Acair - in its niche area - is ‘best in class’ with real strengths and distinctiveness as a publisher, and should have a good future.
Acair Ltd | THE BACKGROUND

Established 1977, Acair publishes a variety of texts and is the principal publisher of Gaelic texts for children in Scotland. The company has over 500 titles to its credit and enjoys strong links with English publishers, joining them in co-editions, sometimes publishing up to 15 such titles in a year. Working closely with children's Gaelic authors and translators, Acair publishes original Gaelic texts for children and with the National Gaelic Curriculum Service to produce material for use in Gaelic medium education.

Acair’s Gaelic publications include texts by renowned Gaelic poets such as Sorley MacLean, Donald MacAulay, Derek Thomson, Angus Peter Campbell and Christopher Whyte, often accompanied by parallel English translations, as well as photographic journals of island historical texts both past and present. Acair books have won literature prizes over the years as well as accolades for design and presentation.

The company also publishes a wide range of titles in English and Gaelic which have a particular connection with the Highlands and Islands and in recent years Acair has published a range of titles in a bilingual format, occasionally with a CD enclosed, which have proved popular with Gaelic learners.

Acair Ltd | DISTINCTIVENESS & STRENGTH

Distinctiveness?...In a word...'An island publisher producing books of high quality'.

Acair has a strong track record of publishing children's books in Gaelic and is probably the main publisher in Scotland in this field as well as general interest books in Gaelic. In addition to publishing books of historical, social and environmental interest, Acair is proud of the good relationships it has developed with writers and the encouragement it has given to contemporary writing. Acair has built up what it feels is a specialism in publishing co-editions of high quality that can be sold at what it describes as 'a sensitive market price.'

High production values are a distinctive feature of Acair's publications in all genres.

Main strengths....

- 34 years continuous publishing programme.
- Established relationship with writers and illustrators.
- Experience of working with other publishers and printers world wide to produce co-editions.
- High quality product.

Acair Ltd | THE BUSINESS INITIATIVE

Acair was originally almost entirely responsible for the publication of Gaelic books for schools but a government funded educational resource unit now fulfils that role and Acair is now only involved in curricular publications on a project commission basis. By 2010 the company was just coming out of what had been 8 years of difficult trading. There had been 'significant ups and downs' especially as a result of trading in the small market (children's books in Gaelic) to which the larger part of Acair's effort was directed. A fresh and thoughtful look at future strategy and options was required.

Conscious of the seriousness of the situation, the Board and manager concluded that while there was 'no case for a new broom for the people or the overall business' action was necessary to arrest the decline in sales. They were satisfied that Acair’s reputation for a good high quality product had been maintained. The problem was that they hadn’t been sold and large quantities of stock lay in storage.

The absolute imperative for Acair was to increase sales.
Some actions that had already been taken included:

- Tendering for several publishing contracts for children’s’ books which if successful would increase the company publishing schedule.
- Taking the opportunity to extend the publication list, adding new products including the first ever Gaelic speaking teddy bear. ‘We have already signed a contract for the production of the teddy and the first prototype will be with us in July with an expected delivery date in November. This will in turn provide new opportunities for media tie-ins.’

The web-site: potential for development

During its review of the way forward, Acair identified its web-site and web-based sales and marketing as the main area in which it believed development and capacity building was needed - specifically to grow sales in overseas Gaelic and general interest markets. Opportunities for e-publishing for backlist and new titles would also be explored. Discussions with a local web consultant reinforced Acair’s own assessment of the existing web site.

What would participation in this Project offer Acair?

Agnes Rennie, manager and publisher, was confident that the Publishing Scotland Project offered Acair the opportunity of an expert input to the analysis of its web-site and an assessment of its capacity to provide a ‘fit for purpose’ e-marketing and sales facility, that could also be interrogated to monitor sales activity. She was also hopeful that it would help Acair to address the capacity issues of her small staff team.

‘The most likely deterrent to us not being able to take this Project forward could be a lack of experience to develop the opportunities offered by a new web site and other marketing initiatives. This is going to require training in new skills for existing staff, augmented where necessary by commissioned contractors.’

‘Historically Highlands and Islands Enterprise would have been the first port of call for the company to seek assistance with development and training initiatives, but this has not been available for some time. We are very conscious that all three permanent staff need to address skills development, but it is not possible to undertake courses which are specific to publishing without travelling to the mainland. Whilst this is costly in time and money we believe it is important in terms of skills training and shared experience with colleagues.’

Agnes Rennie believed that participation in the Project would help Acair to focus on company development, build its capacity and provide all of the members of the small team with what she described as the unique opportunity to participate in the workshops.

Her perspective on Acair’s needs and opportunities was clear, strategic and robust.

- To sell more of our books and to explore how we could improve our web presence....and to begin to explore the use of social media.
- Necessary not just to turn things around, but to create a platform for further progress that would enable the company to have a future. It was that delicate an issue.
- ‘One could have been happy ‘pottering on’ but I believed we actually had the potential and the capacity to do much more than that.’

Measuring success...key measures over 2 years

Year 1
- Increased sales
- Increased profit / sales margin

Year 2
- Increased sales
- 1.5 additional staff
Acair Ltd | WHAT WAS DONE | ROLE OF THE ADVISOR

Acair was initially very focused on the need to develop its web-site, seeing this as a potential retailing opportunity as well as a promotional device. Following the first workshop of the Project, and the initial visit of the advisor to spend a day with the team in Stornoway, it quickly became clear that a wider approach was required to meet Acair’s needs. The subsequent programme of sessions with the advisor covered a range of strategic planning issues - focusing on sales and marketing, and including the web-site - and also provided the opportunity for the three staff members in the team (not including the manager) to undertake short placement’s with relevant specialists in the advisor’s own company, Canongate Books, in Edinburgh. A key starting point in the process was a SWOT analysis undertaken with the team in Stornoway, followed up, during a subsequent visit by the advisor to attend a full meeting of Acair’s Board.

The advisor's first impressions: of the publisher and the business initiative

Jenny Todd, sales and marketing director, Canongate Books

From the start I was impressed by the range and quality of Acair’s publishing and by the obvious dedication and enthusiasm of the team. I was less sure about what seemed to me an over-narrow focus - in Acair’s business initiative - on its website.

Acair’s focus on its web-site as offering the solution to the challenge of increasing sales was something of a red-herring and the team had clearly spent too much time talking about the web-site and what they thought didn't work. In fact, the web-site was generally OK, but that wasn’t the whole story, or the real story. Acair had a fairly unrealistic expectation of what the web-site would be likely to achieve in direct sales.

Knowing something of the experience of web-site sales for my own company, Canongate, and also Penguin, I realised that I would have to encourage the Acair team to move away from the narrow goal of developing their web-site as the selling vehicle, and instead, viewing it as one of a number of sales and marketing tools. What they also needed was a greater awareness of how to work along with consumer web-sites as part of a new approach to marketing and selling their titles.

My first visit to meet the team in Acair confirmed my first impression, and the need for a more strategic review of the publishing business, and this was the route that the subsequent advisory process took - without forgetting the need for web-site improvements.

The publisher’s first impression: of the advisor and what she contributed

Agnes Rennie, publisher

From the beginning we enjoyed a really positive relationship with Jenny Todd. She brought hard experience of the publishing industry and gave it to us, straight. The main message being: ‘You can't sell books if people don't know about them.’ A hard but obvious message which quickly turned around what we had previously thought would be the main focus of our work together.

During our first meeting, after explaining what Acair was and what we did, we quickly got down to brass tacks.

- Started by looking at the website and our attempts to sell books, where they were being sold, and what was being sold.

- It was very quickly pointed out that addressing the issue of sales growth was not something that could be dealt with by a quick fix: ie the web-site would not function very efficiently as a shop and viewing it as such would limit its potential.

- How we might use our web presence to raise our profile and the profile of our titles as a marketing tool was the real question.
By the end of the first visit, our advisor had gained a very clear view of what the actual challenge facing Acair was. With a Board meeting coming up, I was eager that she should attend it so that she could speak directly with the directors about what she saw as the real issues, and how these should be addressed.

**The Advisor’s contribution: what she did, and why**

**Jenny Todd**

Led by the advisor, an early stage brainstorming session and SWOT analysis with the team gave everyone a real sense of where the real issues lay and where Acair should direct its efforts. The opportunity to meet the Board, whose membership had recently been enhanced by the addition of some members with publishing industry and retail backgrounds enabled early messages and proposed directions of travel to be absorbed, considered and endorsed.

**An influential process, and document**

The results of these early engagements resulted in a short but important document which influenced subsequent work during the Project, and which continues to provide a point of reference for Acair’s team, and its Board.

- **a SWOT analysis** with a very frank assessment of Acair’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as a forward looking and progressive view of where opportunities for the future might lie. The threats that were examined looked closely at internal factors as well as considering the wider impact of pressures on the publishing industry generally, and the impacts of the global economic environment.

  Honesty and the ability to ‘absorb the punches’ that inevitably emerge from a properly conducted SWOT analysis, are key measures of the maturity and strength of character of a publishing business (and any other enterprise, organisation or service) and Acair’s qualities stood up to this test. Equally, good, strong and encouraging messages emerged.

- **Short, medium and long term goals** were considered, with clear conclusions on headlines and, importantly, what needed to be done to make progress towards the goals that had been identified. An important feature of the document prepared by the advisor was the straightforward and accessible style in which she had written it - straightforward, jargon free and with a clear statement of what should be done.

**Building capacity and enhancing skills**

Acair’s manager was very clear from the outset that building the capacity of her team was an important aspect of Acair’s participation in the Project, including the area of future web-development. Jenny Todd, and her company Canongate, generously invited each of the three members of Acair’s staff from the most recent graduate placement, to the longest serving member of staff, to attend a one-day placement in Edinburgh with members of Canongate’s team who had expertise in their areas of interest.

As Agnes Rennie (who did not herself undertake a placement) later observed: the placement provided not only an enjoyable experience, but also a significant and personal milestone for each of the members of staff involved.

- **Donalda Riddell**, responsible for administration and finance at Acair had worked with the company for four years. Her time at Canongate was spent with the finance director and the production team from whom she gained insights and information into new systems for financial record keeping and production schedules. She was introduced to information sharing and flow between different areas of the business all of which ‘left her head buzzing’ when she returned to Acair, full of ideas about ‘how to keep us all on the same page when talking about our publications.’
- **Margaret Anne MacLeod**, one of the longest serving employees of Acair with 20 years service is responsible for design and production and managing freelancers. Her short placement at Canongate was spent with its production and design team, including reviewing a selection of 60 examples of projects/titles in progress. Reflecting on what she found to be an enjoyable and valuable visit, Margaret Anne thought the insight she had been given to the choices Canongate made on what to carry out in-house and what to outsource, was particularly thought provoking. 'Although Acair is on a very different scale to Canongate, as a business and in terms of the number of titles being handled at any one time, it made me wonder about the possibility outsourcing more, leaving us with more time to concentrate on what we do really well.'

- Acair had recently acquired a young intern - **Donna Marie MacIver** - who brought interest, enthusiasm and some skills to the team, and an understanding of social media. Although she lacked knowledge of publishing, Acair had high hopes that as she learned and grew into the business, she would take on a role in marketing and publicity, and combine this with developing Acair’s use of social media.

  Advisor Jenny Todd is knowledgeable and highly skilled in this field and her company, Canongate Books was itself investing having in its own web-site Canongate TV. She invited Donna Marie to undertake a short placement to Canongate to meet and learn from Canongate’s sales and marketing team, and those responsible for Canongate TV. The placement was a success, providing even more enthusiasm and an insight into processes and skills including how to work with the Press and media: the kind of stories most likely to attract media interest and which aspects and characteristics of Acair would be most likely to attract media interest.

**Acair Ltd | THE OUTCOME | WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?**

**The publisher’s opinion**

**Agnes Rennie**

Our experience of the Project, which came at a very important time for our business, has been very positive and on several different levels.

It helped clarify for us some things we thought we had to do – for example, re-building the web-site - but also not to do some of the things that we had previously considered a priority. For example, developing our web-site to act as a shop; we do expect to sell from it, but now this will not be its primary purpose. Instinctively we knew we were behind in our use of social media – but it turned out that we were not all that much out of step, compared with other publishers. It was hugely encouraging to learn from other people, and that has been another real benefit of the Project, hearing from other people who operate on a similar level. Discussion of production and print runs, for example: we had not appreciated how much of an issue this was for all of the publishers taking part in the project; we gained much reassurance from what we learned about this topic.

Acair’s experience of the project was been a revelation and provided us with much encouragement. The Board has gained a new impetus. The staff team is very positive, with a new vitality. We have all gained a different perspective on our organisation.

The Board had endorsed the idea of involvement in the Project and was interested and enthusiastic about the process. The Board meeting with Jenny Todd included highlighting some issues that had previously been highlighted during a workshop with another consultant, before we embarked on the Project. Now, with Jenny Todd, we had the benefit of another expert, this time coming from a publishing industry-specific perspective, and reinforcing where the company needed to focus. And in very direct terms:......’and this is what you now have to do.’
Another bit of the Jigsaw fell into place. Acair was offered the opportunity to become an account managed client of Highlands and islands Enterprise: selected as a company that has demonstrated the potential to grow. Although this provides no direct financial benefit as such, it provides Acair with access to commercial and technical support over a period of several years. As Agnes Rennie puts it...."It was a very good bit of serendipity in the summer of 2011, at exactly the point at which we were about to embark on the Publishing Scotland Project.

‘The combination of being accepted for the Project and also being accepted as an account managed client of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, came together at the right time. It gave us as a company, and as individual staff members, the feeling that we really could do this.’

The advisor’s opinion

Jenny Todd

A great deal has been achieved.

Acair has a tight and talented team, more than capable of delivering on the objectives we had collectively identified. 'I provided guidance and was able to be a conduit for them, but I didn’t have to instruct them and made them do it for themselves. They did it, and did it quickly. They are quick learners. It's all there, ready and waiting to be harnessed.

'They need commercial expertise and some practical help finding it, but they know that.'

Acair’s ambitions have been raised and their outward looking approach has increased. They have moderated their previously narrow view of their web-site as a direct selling vehicle, to something broader and part of a bigger sales and marketing mix. Acair is now signed up to Amazon Advantage and the new member of Acair’s team who has responsibility for on-line marketing and PR has gained from time spent with Canongate's IT team.

The members of the Canongate Books team who met the three individual Acair team members felt very positive about their capabilities, and their enthusiasm.

The team has gained an enhanced skills set. The main building blocks are in now in place: the quality of the list and the dedication, passion and talent of the team. What they were not particularly good at was shouting about what they had to offer. They now know what to do about that.

Acair Ltd | LOOKING FORWARD

The publisher: on the medium term future

Agnes Rennie

- If we can carry on, and see through the changes that are being introduced in working practices – and take the big leap into e-publishing along side print publishing, then we should have a reasonably good future, going forward.

What could this mean?

- Continue to increase turnover steadily, over the next few years.
- Profit – in step with turnover....difficult to grow at present as the costs of publishing are increasing. If we are careful in what we do, then we should be able to at least sustain the business at the size it is, and even increase staff further by one member.
- Possible increase in profits of 10-20 percent is possible.
- Can we do this without taking on a staff member?
- And we need to reward our staff.
- But it is tight, very very tight.
The advisor: on the medium term future for Acair Ltd

Jenny Todd

Acair - in its niche area - is 'best in class' with real strengths and distinctiveness as a publisher, and should have a good future.

They have made great progress and what they now need to do is to keep the momentum going. The business needed some commercial shaping and the process of the Project has helped with this. But this is an evolving process without an end point. A strong continuing focus on sales and marketing will be necessary to give Acair the best possible chance of achieving sales growth over time - the main aim of the company's business initiative.

Acair Ltd | ABOUT THE PROJECT

Assessment as a vehicle for business development | Lessons Learned | Recommendations

The publisher

1. For us, the Project was very very good.

2. Our location is always an issue for us as taking part in outside events and courses involves mainland trips with travel and accommodation costs. Plus fees. We are never handed something on a plate. Our investment was significant. An estimate? At least another £1,500 on top of the fee giving an estimated total cost to us - in financial terms - of about £3-3,500. How much product do we have to sell to cover this cost? Being involved in the Project was a real commitment so, wherever possible, we tagged on mainland visits for other reasons, whenever there was a Project workshop to attend.

3. Mentoring was the most important and influential part of the Project for us. The workshops were also valuable, but in a different way and having gaps between them meant that you had time and the opportunity to learn from the presentations and reflect on what you were actually doing back in your own backyard. As the Project progressed, the sessions of the workshops became increasingly targeted, very subject specific and rooted in what we had to think about in an industry context. This undoubtedly resulted from building our profiles as we got to know you better, both directly and from what you learned about us from the advisors. Project management worked very well and we found it very supportive.

4. It was very clear that from the start, the structure of the programme was developed around the individual publishers who were taking part. This was promised in the 'advance information' on the Project. It was a key message and was in practice highly effectively carried out, throughout the Project. 'Never felt at any time there was any kind of template we were being shoehorned into.'
The Advisor

1. Extremely good and an excellent vehicle for helping to develop a small publishing business. I was quite envious myself and sorry that the Project hadn’t been around six or seven years ago when my company, Canongate was at a different point in its growth. I personally learned a lot during the course of the Project.

2. I liked the focus on the individual businesses and the guidelines and framework to support the advisors were just right: enough to help; not enough to restrict.

3. The mix of mentoring and workshops worked really well. The subjects covered by the workshops were good and relevant and delivered by a good range of speakers. There was a good balance between specific publishing and business issues with some valuable topics that were clearly new to many of not most of the publishers - for example, the session on the role and potential contributions of non-executive directors.

ABOUT THE ADVISOR

A short profile

Jenny Todd

Jenny Todd is Sales and Marketing Director of Canongate Books. She joined Canongate Books as Sales and Marketing Director in 2004 from Penguin UK, where she was Marketing Director. Prior to that Jenny held marketing positions at Macmillan and in retail. Responsible for the company’s UK and Export sales, marketing and publicity teams, Jenny has overseen a period of growth and change. For the last two years, Jenny has been collaborating with a range of film-makers and animators, including RSA Films London and Tandem Studios, to explore new ways of taking books to market. www.canongate.tv launched earlier this year.

Jenny is a regular speaker at publishing and creative industry events and was a member of this year’s BA Conference Steering Committee.

ENDS
FLORIS BOOKS

In summary: the publisher | the business initiative | the result

About Floris

- Business name: Floris Books Trust Ltd
- Year established: 1977
- Legal status (ownership): Charitable Company limited by guarantee
- Main location: Edinburgh
- Ownership: Charitable Company. Board of Directors/Trustees appoint the manager.
- Type of books published: Adult non-fiction and Children's fiction

About the business initiative

- To create interactive e-books and/or iPad Apps for, initially, 3 best selling children’s titles
- To find a financially sustainable way of designing, producing, marketing and selling children's interactive e-books / Apps
- To create a new revenue stream outside of the traditional print publishing programme - with a potentially wider international market for a Scottish product
- To increase capacity, gaining new skills and knowledge for in-house staff

About the result

THE PUBLISHER

Katy Lockwood-Holmes, manager & publisher, Floris Books

We’ve experienced a very positive change, despite the fact that our original idea to develop Apps for our best selling titles turned out not to be viable. This conclusion resulted from the hard-nosed approach of our adviser from which we realised that there simply was not a good business case and the volume of sales would simply not justify the investment. In some ways this was disappointing as Floris had geared up to pursue this direction. But it has been a positive outcome from a negative conclusion. We have invested in digital marketing as a more efficient and effective way of marketing what we have, rather than in new products which, it became clear, would not sell. We have also invested in a new staff member, in a marketing role, influenced by a 20 minute presentation during the first workshop of the Project, which convinced me we had to staff-up our marketing capability. The ground we have made up over six months has seen a huge change and a big cultural shift at Floris Books.

THE ADVISOR

Peter Collingridge, director, Enhanced Editions

My experience with apps made me sceptical of their success without very focused, powerful and demonstrable market resources. So, we flipped the idea of the apps over into investigating their digital marketing reach and effectiveness, and honing that into an asset that can be leveraged by the company. My thesis was that if they had strong marketing they could push the apps to a target audience and influence success; if they didn’t then they should reconsider.

I believe that publishers who market directly, control sales channels, understand their customers, and are not beholden to the variations of high street and internet retailers, are the publishers who are set up to thrive. Additionally, I believe that publishers who publish to a narrow and focused, repeat-customer audience are also set up for success. These are two characteristics of Floris’ business that I think suggest a defensive position against the otherwise increasing risks of the publishing industry. Katy absolutely understood the objectives, rationale and the tools.
Floris Books | THE BACKGROUND

Floris Books is an independent book publisher based in Edinburgh. Founded in 1977 as the publishing arm of The Christian Community, a religious denomination associated with the legacy of Rudolf Steiner, much of its publishing is still for, or in sympathy with, the Steiner community.

Floris is currently the largest children's book publisher in Scotland, producing international picture books, story books and children's fiction. Its Kelpies and Picture Kelpies ranges of Scottish novels and Scottish picture books include works by both classic children's novelists and contemporary authors and illustrators. The annual Kelpies Prize was set up to encourage and reward new Scottish writing for children. Winners include Hox by Annemarie Allan and Magnus Fin and the Ocean Quest by Janis Mackay. Kelpies Prize runner-up First Aid for Fairies and Other Fabled Beasts by Lari Don won a Royal Mail Scottish Children's Book Award in 2009.

The publishing programme is split between adult non-fiction (alternative living such as holistic health, spirituality, alternative education, spiritual science, organics/biodynamics, mind body spirit, arts and crafts) and children's fiction (board and picture books, story books and anthologies, and novels for pre-teens). Some of Floris' children's publishing is specifically Scottish but much is international. Export accounts for about 50% of total sales. Turnover doubled between 2003 and 2010.


Floris Books | DISTINCTIVENESS & STRENGTH

The distinctiveness of Floris lies in its claim to 'see the world a little differently' and this is well illustrated in the scope and richness of its titles. Its adult non fiction books cover all aspects of holistic and alternative living, including holistic health, organics and the environment, holistic education, mind body spirit, child health and development, self help, religion and spirituality, and community living.

Floris is a niche publisher, operating in multiple niches.

Katy Lockwood-Holmes takes a very practical view of the business. 'Initially, Floris was a very small publisher and in some respects quite provincial and without many business systems. Yet it had successfully established long-term co-publishing relationships across Europe, and internationally. Floris' international perspective has proved to be valuable to the business and this has undoubtedly contributed to the steady growth in sales over the past five years.'

The essential strengths of Floris as a business can be summed up as:

- a positive, creative and hard-working team where everyone takes responsibility for their area of work, but also involving lots of cooperative team-work
- minimum of bureaucracy and a responsive management structure that allows for quick decisions and action
- active in several niche publishing areas each with a loyal market, helping to spread risk; none of the niches has suffered a serious downturn; building a deep backlist in 10 different niches has provided protection for the business
Floris Books | THE BUSINESS INITIATIVE

The initial idea

Floris’ initial idea was to create interactive e-books and/or iPad Apps or similar platforms, starting with Apps for three of its bestselling Picture Kelpies titles. Kelpies and Picture Kelpies are at the most commercial end of Floris’ publishing - its Scottish children’s novels and picture books published primarily for the domestic market. Currently, publication of this range is part-funded by Creative Scotland.

The wider objective was to find a financially-sustainable way of designing, producing, marketing and selling children’s interactive e-books/Apps. The main benefit, if the objective was successful, would be the creation of a new revenue stream for Floris’ children’s content. This, according to Katy Lockwood-Holmes, ’...looks to the future, outside of our traditional print publishing programme and with a potentially wider international market for a Scottish product.’

Additional benefits would include new skills and knowledge for in-house staff and new relationships with external suppliers/agencies which could be beneficial to other projects. Success would also give Floris an even higher publisher profile which would attracting new children’s authors and illustrators to want to collaborate with the business.

Katy Lockwood-Holmes recognised that ’We don’t currently have the necessary skills and knowledge in-house to embark on this initiative without external support. The Project would give us the space and incentive to tackle a daunting development area which otherwise would probably not be approached in the foreseeable future.’

Capacity-building - central to the business initiative

Despite its proven success, confidence and competence, Floris itself recognised that in order to move forward safely with this initiative, there were 3 areas where development and capacity building would be required.

Production

- We have a culture of print production and have not yet adapted our primary workflow for e-book and other electronic forms of delivery. Change will be possible with involvement and empowerment. Our production manager would be a key figure for this project: one challenge will be freeing up some of her time so she can focus on new areas.

Marketing

- We have no current experience of marketing and selling interactive e-books/Apps and would require advice/guidance on ways to approach this. However, we have an excellent Sales & Marketing Manager who will be enthusiastic and quick to learn new approaches.

Supplier management and financials

- The company has no experience of working with partner agencies to deliver content outside of traditional print production. We will require advice/guidance on the logistic and financial options for doing so.
'You can never stand still - must be open minded and flexible'

Floris is a small, independent and well established publisher that has achieved significant growth, doubling its turnover over recent years. It had secure business and product platforms in place to move forward.

But as Katy Lockwood-Holmes says, 'You can never stand still. The business must be open-minded and flexible, exploring new ways of doing things. Otherwise we would be dead in the water. You have to keep moving.'

Participation in the Project was seen by Floris as offering both space and the incentive to step back, temporarily, from the pressures of day-to-day publishing. 'We are a small team and everyone is incredibly busy. There is not much head space.'

The Project offered Floris the promise of space to step back from the day-to-day and address each of the three strands which provided the main reasons for participating.

- personal development
- method of delivery
- new revenue stream

Floris Books | WHAT WAS DONE | ROLE OF THE ADVISOR

Floris entered the Project with a clearly thought-out and well-structured aim and objectives. Following a period of negotiation, agreement was reached with London-based Peter Collingridge, director of Enhanced Editions, an acknowledged international expert in the digital field; he agreed to act as advisor to Floris. Before their first meeting, Floris provided Peter Collingridge with background information on the business, and the initiative they wanted to pursue: developing interactive e-books and Apps associated with a range of their bestselling children's titles.

This commercial viability of Floris' proposition was challenged by their advisor from the start - and even before their first meeting in London. Subsequently, the development followed a different course to that which Floris has anticipated. Katy Lockwood-Holmes initially thought this was disappointing. 'We had geared up to pursue this direction and developed real momentum, excitement and interest within our team. At the time, it felt a bit of a shame.'

Instead, as a direct result of engagement with the advisor, Floris addressed where it became clear its effort should be more productively - and safely - focused.

The advisor's first impressions: of the publisher and the business initiative

Peter Collingridge, director, Enhanced Editions

Actually, before the first meeting, we had (on email) rethought the original idea, which was for children's apps.

My experience with apps made me sceptical of their success without very focused, powerful and demonstrable market resource. So, we flipped the idea of the apps over into investigating their digital marketing reach and effectiveness, and honing that into an asset that can be leveraged by the company. My thesis was that if they had strong marketing they could push the apps to a target audience and influence success; if they didn’t then they should reconsider.

The general approach then was that rather than spending thousands of pounds on an app that was unlikely to deliver value (other than learning never to do an app again) I suggested that any human / financial investment should focus on learning about digital marketing and the effectiveness of what they do, which can be used over and over again.
The publisher’s first impressions: of the advisors and what they contributed

On Peter Collingridge

First impressions

Floris knew that it lacked the digital skills for designing or producing enhanced e-books and Apps, and the necessary level of insight and knowledge of the financial and marketing aspects of this field. There was felt to be a relatively small pool of advisers with the skills and practical experience of working digitally, who came from a publishing background, and also had a ‘good knowledge of how the numbers worked.’ The level of expertise required, Floris felt, was not available in Scotland.

‘Peter had the type and level of experience necessary to help us, a good publishing background. He quickly gained an appreciation of Floris’ position and what we hoped to achieve. He had the right skills and knowledge to help us.’

Changing direction - shifting the focus

From the outset, Floris, guided by their advisor, took what Katy Lockwood-Holmes describes as a ‘hard-nosed’ approach by tackling the challenge Peter Collingridge had posed - by email - ahead of their first meeting. Later, during a sharply focused meeting in London, they began by looking at the potential size of the market and concluded:

- Based on a revenue stream assessment, there was unlikely to be a good business case for Floris to pursue its planned development of enhanced e-books and Apps; the volume of sales would be insufficient to justify investment costs and even break-even was unlikely. A viable and sustainable new business stream (one element of the business initiative) was unlikely.
- Book Apps - in the advisor’s opinion - were unlikely to be viable, other than for promotional purposes. This opinion was influential, especially so as the reputation of the advisor’s own business was based on developing enhanced e-books and Apps. Recent experience was suggesting, however, that the right level of return was not being achieved from investment in this area.
- With limited financial resources, pursuing the objective of e-books and Apps would be unwise and potentially wasteful of time and finance; put simply, it would not be worth the risk.

Floris accepted the advice: ‘a negative, but there turned out to be a positive outcome from the negative conclusion.’ This process gave Floris the confidence to ‘....disregard the hype. We had looked at this product area and, for us, it did not work as a business proposition at this time.’

The conclusion......?

- Invest in marketing and digital marketing
- Be more efficient and effective in marketing what we already have, rather than investing in new products that will not sell
- Invest in a new staff member, dedicated to marketing
The Advisor's contribution: what he did, and why

Peter Collingridge

We took a very data-driven and analytical approach to marketing. I was told their website delivered a significant percentage of revenue, and Katy clearly understands digital marketing and the power of the web. So we spent much of our time drilling down into their many years of Google analytics data to see who their customers were, which channels were driving visitors (and more profitable than other channels), which keywords were working, and other key metrics. We also started experimenting systematically with page content and advertising campaigns to measure 'conversion' and other effectiveness measures against the original site.

The point of this is to demonstrate that data provides an irrefutable counterpoint to intuition when it comes to marketing. Used effectively, data can therefore give a competitive advantage.

Floris Books | THE OUTCOME | WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

The publisher's opinion

Although quite fundamental, Floris regards the change of direction as having a worthwhile outcome. Together with other Project activities, such as the workshops, the outcomes are considered to have been positive. Katy Lockwood-Holmes summarises the main outcomes as:

- It had an effect on our marketing, and will help propel us to the next level of sales
- For the staff who have been involved (the Floris team, and the manager) it was a really valuable experience: attending the workshops, to see the bigger picture, to think strategically and to plan.
- Developing the team – developing skills and insight.
- Although no new products – and therefore no new revenue stream (as planned) – more effective marketing, and digital marketing, will increase sales in the longer term.

Making connections: workshop activities and advisor recommendations

'The first workshop of the project convinced me that we had to staff up our marketing capability.'

During the first workshop, Jenny Todd, sales and marketing director of Canongate Books, presented a case study on how Canongate had responded to the transforming impact on its businesses of the huge success of 'The Life of Pi.' Her account of Canongate's subsequent consolidation and the decision to invest in staff and systems caused Katy Lockwood-Holmes to reflect on the implications for Floris, which had itself succeeded in doubling its turnover. What lessons could be learned from Canongate's example?

Katy recalls reflecting at the time: 'How had Floris' staffing resource developed? I realised that we had increased our resource in every area except for sales and marketing. Perhaps that was partly because marketing was my own background. And our sales and marketing budget had also not increased over that time.'

'Jenny's message on the value of investing in staff and systems was very important to me.'

As a result Floris took the decision to make a specific marketing appointment, 'a big investment decision for us.' Later discussions with advisor Peter Collingridge on digital marketing development reinforced the importance of this investment decision.
Focus on the data - Google analytics

The change of direction in Floris’ development initiative led Katy Lockwood-Holmes and Peter Collingridge to focus on drilling down into Floris’ many years of Google analytics data – one of Peter’s specialist areas of expertise. Between meetings, the advisor set the Floris team ‘homework’, two or three things with measurable outcomes, providing evidence that could be talked through with him by phone or at the next meeting; ways of driving readers through search engines to come to Floris’ own website, ‘the hub, driving traffic to us.’

The shift into exploring development options for Floris’ next steps engagement with digital marketing involved the Sales & Marketing Manager joining Katy in the discussion with the advisor.

- The scope and scale of future investment implications became clear: essentially a re-design and re-development of the Floris’ three websites
- Development of its Facebook pages
- Yet more work on analytics
- An overall plan for digital marketing development

The advisor’s opinion

Peter Collingridge

I haven’t seen the final results because this is an ongoing experiment, but Katy absolutely understood the objectives, rationale and the tools we are using. Whilst they might appear quite basic, these are tools that very few of their competitors have assimilated into their businesses. I would hope that the ability to measure their outreach is not a one-off outcome, but the beginnings of an institutionalisation of analysis.

Floris Books | LOOKING FORWARD

The publisher: on the medium term future

Floris now expects a period of continuing consolidation for the next two years, while investing ‘here and there, and taking a series of small steps, rather than giant strides.’ Sales have to keep up with investment and so ‘we are not anticipating runaway growth.’ Nonetheless, within three years, Floris expects to achieve a £1 million turnover.

Having already invested (influenced by the Project) in its marketing capacity, Floris now accepts that more internal investment is required in its production capacity, currently the ‘most squeezed’ area of the business. Floris is now recruiting for a full time production assistant.

As part of Faber Factory, Floris has taken to heart the advice of Will Atkinson, Faber’s sales and marketing director, that ‘Your value is in your backlist. You have to digitise your backlist.’ Katy Lockwood-Holmes recognises that while some of Floris’ markets are conservative and ‘not big tech users’ nonetheless ‘there is no question that we have to digitise our backlist.’

More work has to be done on developing Floris’ digital marketing while taking, at this stage, a more cautious ‘softly, softly’ approach to digital product development – a view influenced by the experience of working with their advisor during the course of the Project. Digitising the backlist is however a priority.
**The advisor: on the medium term future for Floris**

**Peter Collingridge**

I believe that publishers who market directly, control sales channels, understand their customers, and are not beholden to the variations of high street and internet retailers, are the publishers who are set up to thrive. Additionally, I believe that publishers who publish to a narrow and focused, repeat-customer audience are also set up for success.

These are two characteristics of Floris’ business that I think suggest a defensive position against the otherwise increasing risks of the publishing industry.

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**Floris | ABOUT THE PROJECT**

**Assessment as a vehicle for business development | Lessons Learned | Recommendations**

**The publisher**

1. It is important to appreciate the actual investment that is required, in time and money to participate in a Project of this kind. We think the process and result was well worth the investment, but the cost has to be taken into account.

2. In addition to the participation fee of £1,500, Floris had the additional cost of two trips to London to meet our advisor. Overall our costs amounted to about £2,500, apart from the time involved in travelling and meeting our advisor and attending the three workshops.

3. How many units of Floris’ books would we have to sell to recover the £2,500? Gross or Net? At GP we would have to sell about £5,000 worth of books. In terms of net profit, after covering our overheads and direct costs, based on a profit to sales ratio of 8% we would have to sell about £30,000 worth of books. And that’s a lot of books!

4. Does the result justify the investment? Yes, it was worthwhile. The process had an effect on our marketing, and will help propel us to the next level of sales. For the staff who have been involved (the wider Floris team and the manager) it was a really valuable experience attending the workshops, to see the bigger picture, to think strategically and to plan. Developing the team – developing skills and insight. No new product (and therefore no new revenue stream) but marketing will increase in longer term.

5. Never underestimate the importance of mentoring – although we had a different type of experience to others. A lot of knowledge out there offered to younger publishers...people willing to give of their time and expertise. Be flexible and open minded about things not going the way we expected at the outset. Things may be different to what everyone thought at the outset. Starting point and end point: a slight shift or a step change.

6. Workshops – that value did these offer? The mixed group worked well bringing together publishers with different backgrounds, experience and expectations. The focus on marketing throughout has been strong and the final workshop, focussing on digital, was particularly strong. The three workshops attempted a breadth of coverage and on good, solid topics, including production. Whatever type of programme and content you offer, given the mix of participants, you will never be able to connect with everyone’s interests, all of the time.
7. Three workshops was about the right number and the continuity and momentum was maintained throughout the series. Individual sessions were most successful when people were speaking from experience: for example, Jenny Todd of Canongate, Will Atkinson of Faber and Vivian Marr of Oxford University Press. The Constable Robinson presentation was excellent and unusual in the level of candour about their business strategy, and actually mentioning figures. You simply cannot buy this kind of knowledge.

8. The level of project management has been superb and the Project felt in safe hands from the start - encouraging and informing. This instilled a huge amount of confidence in everyone involved and everything was done to the highest standard and was utterly professional.'

ABOUT THE ADVISOR

A short profile

Peter Collingridge

Peter Collingridge is a publishing entrepreneur whose work at the maverick edge of publishing began at independent publisher Canongate Books in 1997. He spearheaded the firm's move into digital in 1998 by setting up and running their community website, described by the Guardian as, 'like a cool club stocked with well-read friends rather than a lazy corporate exercise', and pioneered the creation of digital marketing techniques for books. In 2005, Peter set up Apt Studio, a strategic design and marketing consultancy that advises publishers on digital technology and strategy, and which has been described as 'the future of book marketing' and 'behind the best booky stuff on the web.' Apt has produced over 25 digital projects for some of the biggest names in publishing, media, the arts and business. In 2008 Peter co-founded Enhanced Editions to drive innovation in publishing and to help shape the future of the book.

ENDS
FREIGHT BOOKS

In summary: the publisher | the business initiative | the result

About Freight Books

- Business name: Freight Books
- Year established: 2011 – although previously trading as Freight Design since 2001
- Legal status: Limited company
- Main location: Glasgow
- Ownership: Adrian Searle and Davinder Samrai
- Type of Books: Fiction (novels, short stories) poetry, and graphic novels

About the business initiative

- Our project idea is focused on the desire to benchmark ourselves against other independents who started out small but have since grown.
- We want to look at differing models for selling fiction, across editorial, rights and contracts, distribution and marketing.
- We want to look at where our priorities should lie and the best way to generate income and possibly finance.

About the result

THE PUBLISHER

Adrian Searle, publisher and co-owner, Freight Books

For us the degree of change has been massive – we have been sponge like. Before our participation in the Project, as a start-up, it was more like more like downhill skiing, hurtling down the hill, wondering if we should veer off to the right or to the left. We now know so many things that we didn’t know then. With our advisor’s help we now know what the key pieces of the jigsaw are and how they fit together. We are much more confident. At a practical level, we now have a business plan. From the start we wanted to speed up our development and participation in the Project has done this, while also giving us access to a fabulous publishing brain - our advisor, Martin Redfern.

THE ADVISOR

Martin Redfern, consultant

From the start of the Project, Adrian Searle was aware of the need for a business plan to achieve business growth, and what to do to achieve that growth? The starting point must be to publish what will sell and our process involved helping to develop a plan – a road map for achieving growth. Overall, Adrian gained a good understanding of how his business could grow strategically, and he has developed a document to guide what has to be done. Over the six months, the level of achievement, from where he started, has been manifest; Adrian is now more commercially aware and now understands much more about how to manage risk. There is more sales and marketing activity going on and the web-site is now better prepared to contribute to building the brand. Freight should now be better equipped to face the rigours of the tough commercial publishing world and to achieve Adrian Searle’s ambition to become a self-sustaining publisher.
Freight Books | THE BACKGROUND

Established in 2001, Freight is one of Scotland’s leading communications consultancies and has always had a strong involvement in publishing. Freight edits and publishes Gutter, Scotland’s leading magazine of new writing which won the Chairman’s Award at the Scottish Design Awards in 2010. It also designed and typesets the Scottish Review of Books, recently nominated for a number of design awards, and has worked with a number of publishers, including Hachette and Tindal Street, on design and typesetting projects.

Freight has been involved in ad hoc publishing since its formation, mostly through anthologies of new writing and, most recently, the graphic novel Dougie’s War, which has also been nominated for a number of awards. In September 2011 it launched Freight Books, a new fiction imprint focused on work from established, debut and neglected writers born or living in Scotland. Its launch title is Killing the Messenger, a political conspiracy thriller by former Saltire First Book winner Christopher Wallace. Freight Books has a number of other projects in the pipeline and plans to publish around five or six books a year.

Freight Books | DISTINCTIVENESS & STRENGTH

What is the most distinctive feature of Freight Books.....'great ideas, great stories, great books.'.....'a mix of design values and literary values, while understanding the importance of building author recognition.'

Freight takes the view that in fiction publishing, the 'brand' derives from the authors and the titles, rather than the brand of the publisher, while acknowledging that creating a distinctive brand for Freight Books is itself important.

The distinctiveness and strength of Freight Books is in no small part due to the personal passions for literature, and especially contemporary writing, of its director, founder and co-owner, Adrian Searle. It is a very personal business driven by his vision and enthusiasm for establishing and expanding links with authors, widening his network of contacts within the wider publishing industry - and offering design services (typography and cover design) to other publishers.

Our aim is to be as professional as we can be in everything we do, but also to be driven by a passion and love of the work we promote. We want our publishing activities to be self-sustaining and where possible profitable.

Freight Books | THE BUSINESS INITIATIVE

The context: a new venture

Freight Books is a new venture and Adrian Searle had been doing research over the last few years, building up his knowledge of all things publishing. He recognised that there was a major knowledge gap: no one in Freight had worked for an established publishing firm. Continuing research (...'and bitter experience'.) over time might help to fill the gap, but Freight decided to try and shortcut the learning curve through plugging into others’ experience, as this would be more likely to increase the likelihood of success sooner rather than later.

To this extent Freight’s reason for taking part in the Project reflected its desire to benchmark itself, and learn from other independents who started out small but have since grown. The type of companies Freight had in mind included Tindal Street (Birmingham), Canongate (Edinburgh), Alma or Short Books (London) and Stinging Fly Press (Dublin). Freight also wanted to examine different models for selling fiction, across editorial, rights and contracts, distribution and marketing. ‘We want to look at where our priorities should lie and the best way to generate income and possibly finance.’

THE PROJECT  Page | 35
**What’s the business initiative?**

Increasing short term growth by learning from other independent publishers.

Why is this important? As a start-up Freight wanted to find as many ways to learn as quickly as possible, conscious of the need to learn fast to ensure the business generated sufficient revenue in the short to medium term. 'We wanted publishing to be more than an amateur diversion. We wanted to create a sustainable business, while also contributing to the cultural life of the country.'

**What would be the main measures of success?:**

- improved relationships with principal retailers leading to national distribution for some titles - leading to good sales
- improved efficiency (financial, production, international)
- development of a considered plan
- move towards a full-time publishing employee

**Freight Books  | WHAT WAS DONE | ROLE OF THE ADVISOR**

Freight’s business initiative was founded on the desire to ‘to find as many ways to learn as quickly as possible’ and to learn from other independents which it viewed as successful. Contact with its advisor, Martin Redfern, moderated this aim and, over the six months of the Project, enabled a more profound and strategic appraisal of Freight Books’ ambitions. A root and branch review of the key building blocks necessary for a successful publishing business was also required, leading to the development of a written down strategic and business plan.

**The advisor's first impressions: of the publisher and the business initiative**

**Martin Redfern**, consultant

At our first meeting I recognised Adrian’s passion for literature and his genuine ambition to make a leap into a very different kind of business venture. Evangelism in a worthy cause is well and good but there is always a danger - and I am not suggesting this was necessarily the case with Freight Books - of immersion in a passion which might easily lead to a commercially unrealistic result. As I understood more of Adrian’s background and his design business, I saw him as a competent and safe pair of hands as a business person, and this was a good omen. The challenge, therefore, was to provide guidance for what was essentially an amateur publishing venture wanting to become a professional and successful business venture in publishing.

The enterprise is very much product-led and driven by Adrian’s knowledge and enthusiasm for authors and manuscripts, but perhaps with less thought about the end customer and who that might be. The principle of ‘never sign a contract until you know who your business will be with’ is worth bearing in mind.

Freight was eager to compete but fishing in a small pond in which there are some big fish. Adrian’s ambition to make publishing a commercial reality required a quite fundamental and strategic review and much more than sharing the top 20 hints and tips. While Adrian knows his subject area he did not know the business of publishing and this was his reason for Freight Books to be involved in the Project.

I saw my role as being most valuable in providing strategic planning advice. Adrian came to this understanding quite quickly and bought into the need for a strategic overhaul. This set the scene for our work together over the six month period.
The publisher’s first impression: of the advisor and what he contributed

Adrian Searle, publisher

Before our first meeting, I was slightly circumspect as I thought the kind of advisor we most needed was someone with a senior publishing background in fiction. It was however clear from the background information we were given on Martin, that he had an impressive publishing track record, with wide industry experience. Although not in the fiction field, he brought understanding, knowledge and discipline to bear on our ideas. The value of his immense experience became apparent at our first meeting and was borne out throughout the duration of the Project.

His big message was to focus on the market and over the duration of the Project he helped to increase our understanding of what is a viable product. As it turned out, the non-fiction focus he applied was a benefit as he encouraged us to think about publishing options beyond fiction, and taking account of the high risk of our existing commitment to literary fiction. Appreciating more about commercial viability from our advisor was a key part of our learning curve during the Project.

Martin Redfern drew on his 30 years experience of the publishing industry to give Freight what it described as ‘valuable guidance without which we might well have gone down a path of our own choosing that could have led to a dead end.’ By the end of the Project, Adrian Searle concluded that ‘Following careful consideration of Martin’s advice, we decided to publish in areas other than literary fiction.’

The Advisor’s contribution: what he did, and why

Martin Redfern, consultant

Based on his initial assessment of what was needed, and with Adrian’s agreement, Martin Redfern took what he described as ‘a fairly conventional approach’ to his role as advisor, combining questioning, probing technical understanding and offering strategic guidance. Martin thought that Adrian was extremely modest about his strengths, but ‘he did not know what he didn’t know. Part of my role was to help de-risk what he wanted to do.’ Working together, they began with an audit of the business followed by a SWOT analysis - ‘a really good process that really does work, and which Adrian found very helpful.’

In outline, the topics covered included:

Internal capabilities and processes
- Strategic planning activity to date - and capability
- Managerial and staff scope - and capability
- Product development processes: range, level, format, output, etc
- Editorial processes
- Production Processes
- Market channel exploitation
- Pricing strategy
- Sales and marketing activity to date - and capability

External market environment
- Nature of the market
- Socio-economic analysis
- Demographic analysis
- Behavioural issues, especially around digital receptivity
- Macro-economic review
The aim of working through these topics was to provide a clear analysis and assessment of Freight Book's internal processes and capabilities, and its external market position. Based on this information, Martin and Adrian developed a view about Freight Book's future direction of travel: where the business needed to go and how it might get there.

This methodical process helped Adrian Searle to work on his development plan, the purpose of which was to provide Freight Books with a sufficiently clear and detailed road map for growth, and with the material necessary to support applications for funding - such as Creative Scotland’s Cultural Economy Fund.

Freight Books | THE OUTCOME | WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

The publisher’s opinion

Adrian Searle

For us the degree of change has been massive – we have been sponge like. Before our participation in the Project, as a start-up, it was more like downhill skiing, hurtling down the hill, wondering if we should veer off to the right or to the left. We now know so many things that we didn’t know then. With our advisor’s help we now know what the key pieces of the jigsaw are and how they fit together. We are much more confident. At a practical level, we now have a business plan. From the start we wanted to speed up our development and participation in the Project has done this, while also giving us access to a fabulous publishing brain - our advisor, Martin Redfern.

Being 'nudged' in a different direction in some areas was really valuable - for example moving beyond literary fiction, including our first venture into humour! Also, affirmation that we were also doing some things 'right' was encouraging.

And at a practical level we now have a business plan, an output we had not expected from the Project, but of great benefit to the business.

Adrian Searle believes there were other valuable outcomes from Freight's participation in the Project - beyond what was gained from interaction with his advisor Martin Redfern. The support of the other six publishers taking part in the Project, and opportunity to compare and contrast experiences was viewed as a positive outcome and he thought that.... 'probably the majority of the seven will share this view.'

The advisor’s opinion

Martin Redfern

From the start of the Project, Adrian Searle was aware of the need for a business plan to achieve business growth, and what to do to achieve that growth? The starting point must be to publish what will sell and our process involved helping to develop a plan – a road map for achieving growth. Overall, Adrian gained a good understanding of how his business could grow strategically, and he has development a document to guide what has to be done. Over the six months, the level of achievement, from where he started, has been manifest; Adrian is now more commercially aware and now understands much more about how to manage risk. There is more sales and marketing activity going on and the web-site is now better prepared to contribute to building the brand. Freight should now be better equipped to face the rigours of the tough commercial publishing world and to achieve Adrian Searle’s ambition to become a self-sustaining publisher.

Over the four days spent with Freight Books, Martin Redfern believes that significant progress has been made and that Adrian Searle is now thinking and behaving even more commercially with regard to his publishing business. 'But now, robust exploitation of sales and marketing channels is imperative for the business to succeed.'
Freight Books | LOOKING FORWARD

The publisher: on the medium term future

Adrian Searle

We feel very positive about the future. We feel we have real strengths in production and creativity and feel confident that we will be able to build a robust business, long term.

We have a provisional target for growth of turnover in mind over the next three years. Is it ambitious enough? Its difficult to say and achieving it will depend on many things and we are loathe to set an ambition that may not be achievable. In terms of headcount, a potential limitation lies in the number of people we have to help grow the business. To do this we will need some full-time employees, maybe two?

Ideas are key in publishing and coming up with good ideas is something we think Freight is good at. Although times are tough now in the publishing industry, its not a bad time to be a start up, building our knowledge and capacity to be ready for the time when things turn around. There are opportunities for us out there.

The advisor: on the medium term future for Freight Books

Martin Redfern

Looks encouraging at the moment. The change that has been made is positive and Freight is now more focused on the financial implications of everything it does, and plans to do. The business appreciates the importance of segmentation and the integration of marketing and sales activities. And above all, it has a plan to guide it.

As a relatively 'new' publisher, Freight has the problem of not being able to publish 'the big names.' It will take time to establish a track record, and luck, to make Freight Books attractive to them, but there is no doubt that whatever Adrian Searle does, it will be done professionally.

The crunch time may come in three years time after Freight Books has published, say 30 books. The question will then arise as to whether or not Freight has a sufficient business structure (or the will) to deliver growth? To put it simply, will Adrian - the driving energy behind this business - have enough time, energy and investment to devote to the publishing business, compared with his design business? He currently devotes 10-15 percent of his time on publishing, with the remainder dedicated to the design business. What will happen if demand grows in the publishing area, along with more titles and the implications of handling increased marketing and sales? At present he is essentially working on his own. The experience of the Project, and the access it has provided to an experienced adviser, has demonstrated the value of having someone to bounce ideas off. How will he address that issue in the future?
FREIGHT BOOKS | ABOUT THE PROJECT

Assessment as a vehicle for business development | Lessons Learned | Recommendations

The publisher

1. We got a huge amount out of it and it was perfect for us in relation to our position, and experience, at the outset of the Project. The programme was incredibly well run and efficiently run throughout. Inevitably some content was more applicable to Freight’s interests and needs, and some less and the application and benefits of some areas of learning may take time to filter through. But overall, hugely valuable to us.

2. Participation required a significant commitment of time, especially for someone in my position who is at the same time running another business. The time commitment was not only due to direct participation in Project activities, such as attending workshops and the sessions with my advisor, but also the preparation time between meetings with my advisor. The investment of time has been absolutely worthwhile, but if a similar programme is run again, it would be good to make prospective participants aware of what may be involved in terms of the commitment of time.

3. The workshops were valuable and, as ever, their benefits were down to the quality of the contributors and the experience they had to offer. Three workshops over the six months of the Project was about the right number. It is essential to maintain the highest possible quality of speakers. Their knowledge and influence adds great value to the experience, and credibility to the overall Project.

4. For a future programme, the number of participating publishers could be raised to 10, but not more, provided enough advisers of the quality and experience we benefited from can be found to support it.

The Advisor

1. The model of this project was a really good idea for small companies that would not routinely pay for consultancy. A fantastic way to help smaller businesses – a good model and it worked. Better than a ‘training course’ approach. The tailored approach worked well – designed for the needs of individual companies. Struggle to think of a negative.

2. Might have been more concentrated and intense...that is, run over a shorter period than six months...but this might not work for everyone, in terms of their other commitments; for example the person I was advising was also running a parallel business to his publishing enterprise.

3. The real value of the Project lay that it was 100 percent tailored to each firm. In my case, the publisher got what he expected and what he agreed he needed. In terms of value for money, does the result equate with the effort and cost invested in managing the programme, and the cost to each publisher in time and money of taking part - compared say with a more conventional training course? I think it did represent excellent value for money because it was both tailored to the individual needs of the publishers involved and it was an interactive experience. It was a worthwhile way to spend money.

4. The number of workshops was about right. More were not required. The amount of face to face time for meetings between the publisher and their advisor was also about right. I feel very positive about it; it was an interesting and enjoyable experience for me personally and professionally, and I learned more about literary fiction publishing.

5. There are plenty of companies who could do with this help...even medium sized publishers. This was a very good approach.
ABOUT THE ADVISOR

A short profile

Martin Redfern

Martin Redfern is a publishing specialist with extensive experience in the publishing industry gained, in particular, in the provision of legal, business and educational information. He has worked in small, medium sized and multinational operations, and has hands on experience of both business start-ups and acquisitions. Martin has held a variety of senior positions including Marketing Director of Prentice Hall Europe and Editorial & Production Director of Sweet & Maxwell, as well as co-owning Chancery Law Publishing. In Scotland, he has acted as Managing Director of W Green and Publishing Director at Leckie & Leckie.

Martin is now a consultant providing advice and guidance to publishing clients. He specialises in areas such as strategic planning, marketing, new product development, and editorial and production processes. Additionally, Martin has wide ranging experience of training and teaching publishing skills and has regularly taught on post graduate publishing courses at University of Stirling and University College, London. He is a member of the Advisory Board of The Centre for Publishing Studies at the University of Stirling.

ENDS
Case Study

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland

Rebecca Bailey
head of education & outreach | RCAHMS

James Crawford
publishing manager | RCAHMS

James McCall
advisor | principal consultant
International publishing
Edinburgh Napier University

Scotland's Lost Gardens
Victorian Scotland
Scotland's Landscapes
ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE ANCIENT AND HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF SCOTLAND [RCAHMS]

In summary: the publisher | the business initiative | the result

About RCAHMS

- Business name: Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland
- Year established: 1908
- Legal status (ownership): Non-departmental Government Body
- Main location: Edinburgh
- Ownership: Government Funded, Registered Charity
- Type of books published: Mass-market art, Architecture and Photography (illustrated) and academic / research

About the business initiative

- To assess operational strengths and any weaknesses in publishing functions and to identify areas for the future development of the publishing programme.
- To receive targeted mentoring in those specific areas identified as representing skills or knowledge gaps.
- To assess how best to plan, schedule and commission titles to create a strong commercial and research publication list from the organisation’s ‘gold mine’ archive resource.

About the result

THE PUBLISHER

Rebecca Bailey, Head of Education and Outreach, RCAHMS

Taking part in the Project has made us smarter as a publisher and helped tidy-up some of the edges of the ways we do things. There have also been tangible results in terms of saving us money on print procurement and on the storage of books. RCAHMS’ reasons for taking part in the Project never included the ambition to step up our volume of titles or print-runs. Our main ambition was to make better judgements, based on what we learned, in some areas where we were previously naive. Our involvement in the project has: helped professionalize our decision making as a publisher; made us more ‘conservative’ about our publishing decisions; provided us with a better understanding of our decisions and why we have made them; made us less prepared to be ‘gungho’ in our business decisions; helped us to lower our level of operating risk. Overall, the experience of the Project has tightened us up, sorted us out and given us the confidence to move forward in the future.

THE ADVISOR

James McCall, principal consultant, International Publishing, Edinburgh Napier University

Rebecca and Jamie realise what they are good at. Within the constraints of their organisation they now have more confidence in their own abilities. The team reacted well to suggestions about things they could do to improve performance and efficiencies. Getting rid of accumulated stock, learning more about how print buying works are two practical examples. Insights to managing stock levels and some approaches to marketing are further examples of areas in which knowledge and confidence have increased. There was a good response to the final document which they felt would help the case for publishing within the organisation - as well as providing the basis for a forward plan. The problem for RCAHMS is that everyone involved in publishing is also doing other jobs. Consequently, publishing is, for everyone, a part time activity and no one is absolutely dedicated to it. This could be a barrier to progress, over time.
THE BACKGROUND

Established in 1908, RCAHMS publications, according to Rebecca Bailey, deliver wonderfully illustrated and immaculately researched titles to anyone with an interest in Scotland’s history and built heritage. One of Scotland’s national collections, RCAHMS records, interprets and maintains information on the architectural, industrial, archaeological and maritime heritage of Scotland. This is an ongoing task as perceptions of the historic environment change, knowledge and research develops, and as landscapes and townscapes are built, demolished and radically altered.

The work is as essential today as when RCAHMS was founded in 1908. The accumulated results of 100 years of surveying, recording and collecting provide a fascinating picture of the human influence on the landscape of Scotland from earliest times to the present day. This information, which includes 15 million items of archive including photographs, maps, drawings and documents, is made widely available to the public in exhibitions, via the web or browsed in person at RCAHMS’ premises in Edinburgh.

SCRAM, an online archive providing educational access to digital materials representing Scotland’s culture and history, is now part of RCAHMS. The website (www.scran.ac.uk) contains 360,000 images, movies and sound clips from museums, galleries, archives and the media. In March 2010, it supported 25.5 million hits concentrated on weekdays in the month.

The aim of the RCAHMS publishing arm is to produce books that increase understanding of and engagement with the nation’s archaeology and architecture, and that help the people of Scotland to value and enjoy the built environment. All of RCAHMS publications fall into one of two categories:

- Highly-illustrated mass-market titles that highlight RCAHMS work and collections to the widest audiences in the most accessible manner
- Research titles targeted primarily at an academic/specialist audience which aim to boost RCAHMS – and Scotland’s – reputation as world leaders in specific research fields.

DISTINCTIVENESS & STRENGTH

Distinctiveness?

Rebecca Bailey is clear about what makes RCAHMS most distinctive:

- The incredible resource at our disposal for which we have copyright. Immediate access to a huge visual archive: one of the largest collections of aerial material in the world, as well as drawings and photographs.
- We can make very special books on our work without having to go outside the organisation.
- We are different as we do not have to do this on a fully commercial basis. It is part of our duty as a public body to publish our work. So we don’t have the same commercial imperatives as other publishers, but we have to provide value for money for public funds, and are concerned about what we spend.

Main strengths....?

- RCAHMS has a huge resource of collections material on Scotland’s historic and built environment, including some 3 million drawings, prints, maps, manuscripts and photographs.
- RCAHMS holds one of the world’s largest and most significant aerial photographic archives, made up of over 1.6 million images of Scotland, and 18 million military reconnaissance images from across the globe, dating from 1939-1989.
The collection's material is bolstered by expert staff with a wealth of specialist knowledge and expertise in the fields of architecture, archaeology, history and aerial photography.

The RCAHMS publication team has a strong background in the areas of editorial, design, production, and marketing.

Does Rebecca Bailey think that RCAHMS' distinctiveness and strengths give it any advantage over other publishers - such as those that are wholly operating as private sector businesses?

- We have the resources of the larger organisation behind us.
- We do not stand or fall based on the performance of one publication and can deal with problems when they arise – and we have done - more easily than a small publisher, where it is the only business.

RCAHMS | THE BUSINESS INITIATIVE

Overview

RCAHMS has used publishing as a way of reporting its work for over 100 years but has only recently developed its publishing to reach new and wider audiences, and in ways that are more business focussed. A recent internal review of the publishing operation has identified a number of areas for change, largely in terms of business efficiency.

Although an internal review has already taken place, we see the project as being a key factor in establishing the ongoing success of RCAHMS publications by providing targeted mentoring in those specific areas that we have identified as having skills or knowledge gaps.

The publishing team at RCAHMS, while having a range of experience, are not formally trained in publishing or business, and would - through engagement in the Project - benefit from experienced, external advice to help navigate a successful path through the currently challenging market conditions.

- RCAHMS Head of Publishing, Rebecca Bailey, is an architectural historian with extensive editing experience but no specific training or qualifications in commercial publishing.
- RCAHMS Communications and Publications Manager, James Crawford, has worked as a literary agent and editor and so has previous experience in specific areas of publishing - but no prior experience working as an actual publisher.

Rebecca Bailey commented: 'Knowledge across the team has been built up over the previous few years, but this project would help to take our publishing business acumen to a new level of professionalism. Publishing is complicated. Previously, I had relied on some knowledge and commonsense to see me through, but realised that I had reached the limit of where commonsense could take me. I needed to raise the level of my professional knowledge – and did not have time to go and follow a postgraduate course to do this.'

Plan, schedule and commission

One aspect of RCAHMS' business initiative was how to approach the planning, scheduling and commissioning of titles that would create a strong commercial and research publication list from the organisation's 'gold mine' archive resource.

- The project would see the creation of a long term version of this list, and would explore how best to use it to generate business growth.
- A key aspect of this would be to produce a robust publications forward business model for RCAHMS in light of the current instability in the publishing market.
- This would proceed by assessing RCAHMS' publications strategy and the recent (internal) review in terms of finances and capacity - looking in detail at sales and distribution, both within Scotland and throughout the UK and overseas.
- To improve margins and pinpoint where the opportunities for growth lie.

Given the blend of archive material, creative flair, and expert academic knowledge found in RCAHMS, Rebecca Bailey and James Crawford were confident that RCAHMS had the potential to carve out a niche in Scottish publishing. Previous titles – most notably Above Scotland – had been particularly successful examples of this approach, and RCAHMS felt that the team would benefit from specialist consultation to build on this for the future.

Current publishing strategy

The stated aim of RCAHMS' existing publications strategy was to:

- Produce two highly illustrated mass-market titles each calendar year to showcase our collections to the widest possible audiences.
- Release three academic/research titles every five years. While these may have cross-over appeal – and are produced with a commitment to accessibility – their role in the programme is as an outlet for the high quality research work being carried out by core staff in the fields of architecture and archaeology.

One specific vehicle for ‘road-testing’ a new business model – and looking into the potential for promoting Scotland to foreign markets in general – was RCAHMS’ new title, Scotland’s Landscapes, which was planned to feature stunning aerial photography to tell the story of the changing nature of Scotland’s landscapes from prehistory up to the present day. Slated for autumn 2012 publication, it was about to begin its production cycle, and so was ideally placed to fit in with the time period of the Project.

RCAHMS is not a commercial publisher

Although revenue generation is a consideration for RCAHMS mass-market titles, it is balanced (in a way that it would not be in a purely commercial publishing house) by an outreach objective which seeks to increase understanding of and engagement with the National Collection; and, by extension, promotes the innate value of Scotland’s history and environment both at home and abroad.

The adoption - and internal ratification - of a long term publications list and forward business model would allow for concrete scenario planning, particularly in the light of impending public sector funding cuts. Success would be measured in terms of the growth in reach and profitability of RCAHMS publications in domestic and foreign markets.

As Rebecca Bailey observed: We have already recognised that the efficient streamlining and auditing of our publications arm is essential in light of market forces, and is crucial to the continued existence of our publishing programme. The project has the potential to ‘fast track’ this process and secure the future output of an organisation that has the potential to add a great deal to Scottish Publishing.

Building capacity

There was already a considerable amount of experience, knowledge and enthusiasm in the publishing team who were to be involved in the project – in particular, in editorial and marketing.

The Project would, the team felt, prove invaluable in providing a more extensive appreciation of business opportunities and how to exploit them. Both Rebecca and James have multiple responsibilities at RCAHMS, many of which are completely separate to publications, while also having publishing as a key aspect of their individual jobs.
To a certain extent, the capacity to deliver the business initiative would, the team thought, be determined by their involvement in the Project, which aimed to produce a long term list and forward business model for RCAHMS’ publications activities. The funds were already in place to follow through on the current plan (prior to the Project) to publish two mass-market titles for autumn 2012, and to explore how best to sell these titles into domestic and overseas markets.

RCAHMS | WHAT WAS DONE | ROLE OF THE ADVISOR

Prior to its involvement in the Project, RCAHMS had been exploring ways in which its publishing operation could be developed and improved both in its internal publishing systems and structures and also in its focus on new and expanding markets. Specific areas of weakness had been identified and these required practical solutions. These issues provided the agenda for the publishing team’s interaction with its selected advisor, James McCall.

The advisor’s first impressions: of the publisher and the business initiative

James McCall

My remit, which I agreed at the outset with RCAHMS, was to assess its operational strengths and any weaknesses in its publishing functions and to identify areas for the future development of its publishing programme. Understanding the factors that differentiated RCAHMS from the other six publishers taking part in the Project - all of whom were commercial and private sector publishers - was important.

- It was important to keep firmly in mind that publishing is not the core business of the organization. In common with other public sector bodies, achieving profit levels and ensuring shareholder satisfaction, were not central to its objectives.
- But it is nonetheless crucial that any organization with a publishing function systematises its operations, sets targets, records them and analyses the results.
- It is in this area in particular that the RCAHMS publishing operation can become more ‘professional’ – and can seek opportunities for working with other publishing professionals as one of its possible strategies for future growth.

Issues for consideration

The first step was to identify and agree the main steps and the most important areas of intervention. In other words, what did the publishing team at RCAHMS most need and what information and insights would be most useful to help them? After discussion with Rebecca and James, we agreed on four areas priorities for critical examination:

- Existing publishing structures – ‘the book chain’
- Identifying and controlling costs, prices and margins
- New products and markets
- Future strategies for growth

While each of these is important, any publishing unit, public or private sector and however small, must have an identifiable strategy which embraces the kind of books it will publish, how it will publish them and how much it is willing to invest in the operation. This was a challenge for RCAHMS, but necessary if it was to be able to keep pace with changing market conditions.

Existing publishing structures – ‘the book chain’

An initial analysis of RCAHMS’ editorial, production, selling and distribution operations confirmed the presence of two broad categories in its list. Also, that while the publishing model for RCAHMS could not be a straightforward commercial one, its publishing activities should follow standard ways of working, and lessons learned from conventional routes to market.

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James McCall reached an early conclusion. Within the constraints of its remit, and its public sector ethos, RCAHMS’ publishing department works reasonably well, employs rigorous editorial standards and produces high quality books. There was however room for improvement in several areas, most notably at the front end of the operation – the area which concentrates on authorship and new title acquisition.

Identifying and controlling costs, prices and margins

Based on analysis and after discussions with Rebecca and James, the following recommendations were made in respect of editorial and related control systems:

- RCAHMS’ publishing unit should have full budgetary control over all aspects of spending on new titles. It must be the responsibility of the publishing unit and the publishing unit to decide how to allocate its financial and human resources.

- There are three main areas where costs should be predicted and regularly assessed. These correspond to the three principal publishing sectors. There should be, as a pre-requisite for future planning, an annual Editorial Budget, a Production Budget and a Marketing Budget. These budgets should be regularly revised and reconsidered. A first draft of the 2014 budgets, for example, might be prepared at the beginning of 2013, and modified as time passes in reaction to external factors or changing circumstances.

- While it may not be possible or desirable to calculate the gross profit margin on individual titles, there should be a clear statement of price, print run and costs in any Forward Publishing Programme, based on accurate estimates of the costs of materials, printing and binding, promotional activities including catalogues and prospectuses and any appropriate out-sourcing - e.g. freelance editors or designers.

- This is an essential part of any publishing operation. It allows for a regular check on costs, and, crucially, it makes it possible to compare and contrast options for taking on new titles, based on a comparison of gross profit figures.

- It was strongly recommended that the existing budgetary documents be suitably modified to allow for such comparisons to be made, and that the information be regularly updated and monitored at least on a monthly basis.

Sales and Marketing

A sensible marketing operation is in place, capable of promoting new titles to conventional market outlets and identifying and pursuing new market opportunities. The selling and promotion of new titles and backlist titles requires a specific skills set. It requires a knowledge of the book trade; it is not generic. The experience and expertise of James Crawford, the publications manager, is relevant and appropriate to these ends.

- It is however clear that in two cases (Above Scotland and Cities and Victorian Scotland) the demand for titles has been over-estimated, resulting in unacceptably high stock levels. Lessons have obviously been learned from this experience and it is not an error that will be repeated. The quantity of stock involved, and the pattern of sales which have been sluggish throughout 2011, means that significant warehouse charges are inevitable for these two titles, and these charges are set to continue indefinitely. It is recommended that these stocks be reduced by remaindering some or all of the stock rather than continue to pay for warehousing which is now very unlikely to yield any return.

- Further work needs to be done on the penetration of markets outside of Scotland, and in that area the new agreement with Casemate UK Ltd for representing RCAHMS titles in England, Wales and France, was a positive step.
Further research should be carried out to identify ways in which the list may be promoted to countries with a potential interest in the kind of consumer titles which RCAHMS plans to produce (sometimes referred to as the ‘diaspora’ market in, for example, Canada, Australia and New Zealand). There may also be possibilities for pursuing strategic alliances in other territories, most notably China.

The trade market as a whole is not performing well for publishers in the present climate. Pressures from Amazon, high discounting and supermarket outlets have all made it harder for publishers to generate sales through conventional retail outlets. In these circumstances it makes sense to sell direct to the consumer. It is recommended that RCAHMS investigates how it can best promote and sell direct to potential readers and book buyers, capitalising on appropriate mailing lists and knowledge of its existing customer base.

Stock control

An examination of current stock levels across the publishing list identified several areas for savings, both in terms of storage costs and space occupied in the RCAHMS publishing catalogue. There are several titles with very little stock left which could simply be allowed either to ‘sell out’ without having a catalogue entry, or be remaindered in some way or indeed pulped, although this last option may not be necessary if either of the other options can be sensibly pursued.

Catalogue

The strategy of selective stock reduction will cut up to six pages from the existing catalogue, with resultant savings in print costs. Consideration should also be given to choosing a slightly larger format and possibly redesigning the catalogue.

There is one essential criterion which should be satisfied before a new title is added to the catalogue. A catalogue entry should be passed for press only if it is clear that stock will be available at the time specified in the catalogue copy. Although manuscript preparation times are sometimes difficult to predict accurately, particularly at the writing stage, the responsibility lies with the writer, and with the organization more generally, to be attentive to schedules which have been agreed, and sympathetic to the professional requirements of the publishing team and their external suppliers.

Future strategies for growth

A three year publishing plan

RCAHMS’ publishing unit should be responsible for creating and monitoring a three year publishing plan, covering both new book content and anticipated costs and revenues. Unless this is done, it is unrealistic to look for any sense of direction in publishing strategy or to expect the publishing department to react to changing conditions in the market and in audience expectations and preferences.

RCAHMS’ publishing unit should be directly responsible for the author/editor relationship. In any publishing operation, there has to be one individual (usually called the commissioning editor) who nurses, controls, cajoles and manages the author. That person must be granted responsibility for success or failure and must be empowered to manage the author and make demands on him/her in the knowledge that the organization will be supportive. Unless there is respect for the editor’s position, it is very difficult for any publishing project to succeed.

To maintain the highest standards of editorial and writing quality, writers should supply a sample chapter and synopsis open to peer assessment and approval, perhaps via an Editorial Board. This initiative would have the clear objective of providing assistance and advice to the writer. It is standard practice throughout the publishing industry and an absolutely crucial element in quality assurance. It would certainly be one of the key expectations of any joint venture partner.
RCAHMS should consider more extensive use of freelance editors. Copy editing is not work that requires to be done by an internal senior manager. It is common practice throughout the publishing industry to outsource sub editorial, proof-reading, indexing and similar functions, and has been for some years. To use senior in-house staff - such as Rebecca Bailey - to undertake such work is a misuse of resources.

For a small publishing operation, RCAHMS' marketing effort is professional and well executed.

RCAHMS' existing arrangements for physical distribution via Booksouce are entirely suitable and should remain as they are. Booksouce is based in Scotland, serves the membership of Publishing Scotland and provides a high standard of care to its clients at a reasonable price.

Above all, it is absolutely vital that, if the publishing division is to pursue new challenges in areas other than research-based titles (ie in the trade or consumer market) everyone involved in the publishing programme, both outside the organization and, more importantly, within it, must recognize the importance of scheduling and take very seriously their responsibility for adhering to the timetables set out by the publishing division. Little progress will be made in building a successful publishing list unless this principle is accepted by every participant in the ‘book chain’.

Production and design

RCAHMS' production values are high and design standards are impressive. Plans are in place to investigate alternative sources of printing buying, perhaps outside of Europe, as long as the cost savings that could be achieved are not at the expense of the high quality products for which RCAHMS has a well deserved reputation.

Additional consultancy advice in this specific area was later provided by another member of the Project’s advisory team: Ron Grosset, advisor to Sandstone Press - who has highly specialised knowledge, experience and expertise in the field of production and print buying.

Joint ventures and similar partnerships

Possibilities for joint venturing with commercial publishing houses should be investigated with a view to a small and achievable increase in the number of trade/consumer titles published per year. Given the pressure on RCAHMS' existing staff time, this could be one way of adding to the new book output if this is a desired objective. It also has the advantage of being resource light.

A joint venture arrangement can take a number of forms. Variants in the joint venture model will affect the degree of control over the project which is retained by RCAHMS and will also affect the split of financial investment or return. But joint ventures need not be based on a simple sharing of costs and income.

It may be that a particular publisher has an expertise which RCAHMS does not have, perhaps (for example) in some aspect of marketing or in knowledge of a particular market, either subject based or territorial. Or a partner publisher might have the editorial capacity to project manage specific titles, thus taking some of the editorial workload away from RCAHMS staff who may already have time-consuming responsibilities in areas other than publishing. So it is conceivable that a joint venture arrangement might be reached on the basis of shared responsibilities rather than cost sharing.
Joint venturing would serve two purposes. First, it would enable RCAHMS to publish more titles (not necessarily many more, but more per year than existing human resources allow). Secondly, joint venturing, by creating additional RCAHMS badged titles, would help promote the RCAHMS brand.

The publisher’s first impressions: of the advisor and what he contributed

The first stage of the advisor’s work focused on analysing and validating what we were currently doing, and what we did well. This was a very good and thorough process which led on to identifying and confirming where we agreed advice was most needed.

From the very beginning, and throughout our sessions together on the Project, Jim was incredibly supportive of us as people who were trying to do their best.

There was, however, a point where our respective views about our ambition, and where our advisor thought we might go were different, although Jim had, from the outset, a very good understanding of our organisation. Having previously worked as an advisor to another public sector body operating in a similar field (heritage) he well understood the underlying dynamics of our type of organisation.

- We wanted more push to grow as a publisher in professionalism: developing our knowledge and how to apply it.
- Our advisor, while recognizing this, and supporting this ambition, also wanted to encourage us to explore possibilities to grow the volume of production and sales of our books.
- But we did not want a big step change of this kind. For RCAHMS, publishing as an activity has to remain proportionate - as a scale of activity within the overall structure of the organisation.

As the Project proceeded, we agreed with Jim to pull back from the aspiration to grow scale and volume, and to focus effort on helping to develop our knowledge, operational skills and strengths, as well as helping to outline a future direction for our publishing strategy. He was immensely supportive of us as people, and, overall, taking part in the Project has made us smarter as a publisher and helped tidy-up some of the edges of the ways we do things.

One specific area of weakness in our knowledge and experience lay in print and procurement, areas in which Jim was not an expert. He suggested bringing in another advisor from the Project, Ron Grosset.

- Ron was able to provide us with valuable knowledge as well as expertise and industry contacts. Given where we were up to in our production planning for a current title, this additional expertise provided us with practical support that had an immediate and practical impact.

In the final stage of the Project, our main advisor’s final report stepped back from recommendations aimed at increasing volume, and provided us with areas of focus and valuable guidance to help us construct - with confidence - our own forward plan.
RCAHMS | THE OUTCOME | WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

The publisher’s opinion

The outcome for RCAHMS was successful on three different levels.

1. People orientated - the professional support offered to us was just right and has provided tangible and positive benefits for what we do, and also, and importantly, what we feel about ourselves.

2. Strategic - The advisor’s final report contains important messages and recommendations: the publishing team can do it better if they do the following things. This has been immensely helpful to the team in terms of explaining what we do, and our ideas, throughout the organisation.

3. Practical - the experience introduced tangible changes that we were able to make immediately. For example when Jim McCall invited us to think about alternative ways of doing things, simple things arising from our insight into the book chain.

   For example: why should Rebecca do all the proof reading (alongside all of her other work)... she is the most expensive proof reader imaginable. So stop doing it! Now someone is paid by the hour while Rebecca previously did it at home. An immediate and beneficial change.

   Another example: Ron Grosset’ guidance changed the procurement path for RCAHMS’ next book. Again, immediate action, and productive.

   Yet another example: RCAHMS was sitting on a lot of stock. This generated internal disquiet within the organisation about the storage costs of unsold stock and ‘what we were doing about it.’ Many ideas were offered internally for dealing with this, but we were able to take professional advice from our advisors on the Project. Jim McCall gave advice on what we should do and we acted on it immediately, including taking stock to the London Book Fair and opening new sales and distribution contracting. We are now clearing our stock to a plan, based on industry advice. Practical stuff – but which is enabling us to work smarter.

   The outcome has been very positive overall. Not a total transformation – but very encouraging confirmation that in many respects we were actually doing quite a good job, while at the same time, recognizing there were some very practical and immediate issues where we did gain help, information and insights that were put to immediate, practical and productive use.

The advisor’s opinion

Has there been change and how would I characterise ? Broadly speaking, positive. Rebecca and James realise they are good at what they do within the constraints of their organisation and now they have more confidence in their own abilities. At an individual level, I feel the Project has had a positive effect on each of them.

The team reacted well to suggestions about things they could do to improve performance and efficiencies in publishing activity. Getting rid of accumulated stock, learning more about print buying are just two examples. Insights to managing stock levels and some approaches to marketing are examples of some of the areas in which knowledge and confidence have increased.

The scope for potential partnerships was usefully explored although it would be fair to say that RCAHMS hesitates about the idea of collaboration, perhaps due to the culture of the wider organisation.
There was a good response to the final document which they felt would help to explain in more detail the role of publishing within the organisation. If a sustainable impact is to be achieved, it is essential to widen involvement beyond the immediate team. The problem for RCAHMS is that everyone involved in publishing is also doing other jobs. Consequently, publishing is, for everyone, a part time activity and no one is absolutely dedicated to it. This could be a barrier to progress, over time. The team felt that interactions with their advisor had been helpful to the team, and contributed to a more encouraging impression of publishing within the organisation.

RCAHMS | LOOKING FORWARD

The publisher: on the medium term future

Rebecca Bailey

Taking part in the Project has made us smarter as a publisher and helped tidy-up some of the edges of the ways we do things. There have also been tangible results in terms of saving us money on print procurement and on the storage of books.

RCAHMS reasons for taking part in the Project never included the ambition to step up our volume of titles or print-runs. Our main ambition was to make better judgements, based on what we learned, in some areas where we were previously naïve. And we have achieved that ambition.

Our involvement in the project has:

- helped professionalize our decision making as a publisher
- made us more ‘conservative’ about our publishing decisions
- provided a better understanding of our decisions and why we have made them
- made us less prepared to be ‘gung-ho’ in our business decisions.’
- helped us to lower our level of operating risk

The experience has tightened us up, sorted us out and given us the confidence to move forward in the future.

James Crawford

Through the experience of the Project we have been able to harness our resource and bring it to a 3-5 year business model which we can now take forward.

In the medium to long term, RCAHMS can become an increasingly valuable asset to the Scottish publishing industry. RCAHMS is in a position to publish very high quality illustrated titles which highlight Scotland’s built history, built environment and cultural heritage.

We are looking to the future. We realise that maximising the publishing potential of our resource – in terms of both business efficiency and quality of content – is a realistic goal, and that the Project has equipped us with a number of key tools to achieve it.
**The advisor: on the medium term future for RCAHMS**

James McCall

Given the state of the market and the economy in general, this may not be the best time to start a publishing company. However, for those that are at an early stage - even the small ones - where there is potential, as there is with RCAHMS, there is an opportunity to grow.

In my opinion, with a careful choice of collaborators and partners, RCAHMS can go forward, reasonably confident in its own abilities to publish specialist quality products.

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RCAHMS | ABOUT THE PROJECT

Assessment as a vehicle for business development | Lessons Learned | Recommendations

**The publisher**

Rebecca Bailey

1. As a vehicle for development, the Project provided us with a supportive environment to reflect on what we do, and to make us more confident in what we do. The overriding value of what our advisor Jim McCall provided during the project was a sympathetic and supportive environment, providing the incentive and opportunity to set aside time to focus on publishing and to think, consider and discuss issues, ideas and options.

2. Overall, the Project offered a very high quality and bespoke experience. It was obvious that much care and thought had been put into the design, delivery and management of the Project. Throughout, project management of the Project was exemplary.

3. The emergence of the 'spirit of the magnificent 7' was a notable and unexpected feature of the Project and perhaps this was not celebrated as much as it might have been. What emerged was a new community of knowledge rather than rivals and there was a real sense of a supportive environment across the 7 companies. It was perhaps harder for RCAHMS to establish business-to-business links with the others as we are not a commercial publisher.

4. The legacy of the Project could have been consolidated by one additional workshop and even extending the timescale for the programme beyond 6-months, perhaps by as much as three more months. While the shorter timescale and 3 workshops certainly focused the mind, this timescale, including the sessions spent with our advisor, meant that at times it resulted in a bit of a struggle with my own diary. So from my point of view, a future programme should be longer than 6-months, with more advisor-days and more workshops.

5. Access to more than one advisor was helpful, as, in our case, one advisor would not have been sufficient for our particular needs. Jim McCall was a very good mentor, but we also gained from the contribution of a specialist (Ron Grosset) in a particular area - print buying and procurement; this provided valuable practical advice.

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James Crawford

1. Participation in the Project was an invaluable experience for us. As no member of staff works full time on publishing – yet it is a key aspect of RCAHMS work – the Project provided space and time to focus on specific, practical details in our publishing operation, and a framework for improving business efficiency. With so many competing demands on staff time, one of the key aspects of improving how we publish in the future was to identify and capture those efficiencies.
2. Having someone to come in and look across the broad range of what we do was essential. Our mentor was able to plug into various skills and knowledge gaps we had. Yet, just as important, they were able to confirm where we were already doing things right.

3. The various experiences gained during the Project also gave us the confidence to work well externally and internally, bolstering our ability to explain the rationale behind our publishing strategy, and the practical reasoning we employ to drive business and editorial decisions.

4. The Project has come at a time when the publishing industry is changing very fast – and in some respects is undergoing a revolution as a result of the explosion of digital. The chance to meet other publishers taking part in the Project – alongside prominent industry figures at specific workshops – highlighted the uncertainties facing all publishers in the future. While there are major challenges ahead, it was also clear that there is a community within the industry prepared to share knowledge and experiences to help everyone navigate the pitfalls and opportunities of a volatile marketplace.

5. Perhaps as a legacy of the Project, Publishing Scotland could look at more ways of facilitating collaboration between publishers who have taken part – where appropriate – or even explore the creation of a rolling panel of experts whose advice can be sought on specific areas on a formal (or informal?) basis. This would give a permanent basis to a ‘mentor’ culture and help to ensure best practice throughout the industry in Scotland.

The Advisor

For me, a measure of any project is the answer to the question: did I enjoy it? I did enjoy this Project and I think it succeeded as a development tool for small publishers for two main reasons.

- **First**, because it addressed a very specific market. In this case seven small independent publishers, each of whom had representatives who were willing to contemplate change.

- **Second**, the Project - as a programme - had a set of very clearly defined objectives, supported by a range of activities including workshops and advice provided to each publisher by a carefully selected advisor; in some instances, as with RCAHMS, offering access to another advisor where an additional area of specialist knowledge was thought to be valuable.

So, overall, I would assess the Project as having had a positive outcome for the publishers involved. It now has to be monitored to see if the outcome is even more positive in the future.

ABOUT THE ADVISOR
A short profile

**James McCall**

James has worked as a production controller, editor and publishing director for a variety of international companies including Methuen, Longman, Blackie and Macmillan. He now specialises in educational publishing policy in Europe and the third world. His particular interest is in textbook evaluation and the construction of National Book Policies. He has taught and lectured in international publishing in various universities in the UK, Africa and the Far East, including writing and delivering postgraduate degree programmes.
He was formerly Deputy Director of the Centre for Publishing Studies at the University of Stirling and is currently Principal Consultant in International Publishing at Edinburgh Napier University.

He has presented courses on effective textbook publishing for publishers and Ministries of Education in the Netherlands, Estonia, Finland, Montenegro and Slovenia. James McCall has worked as an international consultant in over thirty countries on donor funded publishing projects and been adviser to various Ministries of Education in Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and South East Asia, as well as to public sector organizations including the NHS and English Heritage. He is also Secretary of the International Association for Research on Textbooks and Educational Media (IARTEM) and a member of the panel of judges for the Best European Schoolbook Awards.

ENDS
SANDSTONE PRESS LIMITED

In summary: **the publisher | the business initiative | the result**

*About Sandstone Press*

- Business name: Sandstone Press Limited
- Year established: 2002
- Legal status (ownership): Private company limited by shares
- Main location: Dingwall - Highland Scotland
- Ownership: Shares are owned by the three directors
- Type of books published: Non-fiction, Fiction and Gaelic educational

*About the business initiative*

- Development of the whole company and increase capacity.
- Improve awareness of our products and profile.
- Increase sales leading to employment of full-time staffs.

*About the result*

THE PUBLISHER

**Robert Davidson**, publisher; managing director, Sandstone Press Ltd

Our initiative for this project was the development of the whole company, to increase capacity, improve trade and public awareness of products and profile, increase sales and move the company into a position where it can employ staff on a full time basis. Our reason for wishing to do this is to strengthen our company, make it sustainable, and to be a flagship creative industry in the Highlands. Over the period of our involvement in the Project we have increased the number of books on our publishing programme and we are making progress on sales - professionalized though our association with Faber Factory Plus. Our professional practice has improved in the area of production as a result of our relationship with our Project advisor Ron Grosset. Our success in competitions makes us more attractive to agents and authors and the number of visits to our website has increased substantially. We have not yet acquired premises or increased our staff. More sales and confidence will be required to take these steps, which we recognise are important. Overall, we very positive about what has been achieved.

THE ADVISOR

**Ron Grosset**, managing director, Waverley Books

What the PROJECT has done for Sandstone is to give them the opportunity to take a deep breath and say, 'I have now had help (eg with production issues) and I now know how to handle that.' When you spend too much of your time, worrying about things you don't understand, like production, for example, it takes your eye off the ball. Now they can now focus on other parts of the business. In Bob's case, this is to tackle editorial matters - which he does well. That's a message discussed among the wider group during the Project, and during workshops. Don't be afraid or too niggardly to buy-in services because if you have got a level of trust with suppliers, and confident that they are going to deliver what you need, at a fair price, you can concentrate on what you do best in the business. Sandstone really has got something to offer. All has come in a relatively short period of time which happily coincided with Sandstone's involvement with the Project.
Sandstone Press Ltd | THE BACKGROUND

Established in 2002, Sandstone Press is a publisher of fiction and non-fiction books. Based in Dingwall, Ross-shire, in what the company describes as 'Highland Scotland', Sandstone believes that, as a brand, it is characterised by 'high editorial and design standards, internationalism and strong engagement with the contemporary world using modern methods.' Sandstone Press also publishes ebooks in both Kindle and epub format, as well as the printed book.

Sandstone began with poetry pamphlets but quickly moved into Adult Literacy and was the first company in Scotland to produce appropriate reading material in novella form for readers with literacy needs. It had considerable success in this field, and many adult learners benefited from its lively and engaging ‘Vista’ series.

Its narrative non-fiction has a strong focus on the outdoors and the company has produced many books which have the journey as a theme. Having recently moved into fiction, Sandstone is now approached daily by authors and agents submitting novels. 'We have been pleased to accept books by good authors whose experience of larger publishers has led them to prefer the more personal and supportive relationship Sandstone provides.'

Sandstone Press books have been short listed for many literary awards including: The Testament of Jessie Lamb by Jane Rogers which was long listed for the 2011 Man Booker Prize; Shadow Behind the Sun for both the Saltire Society and SAC/Royal Mail Scottish First Book prize, and Cairngorm John for Boardman Tasker Mountaineering Literature Award. The company has also developed a new kind of fiction reader for advanced learners of Gaelic and works closely with the Gaelic Books Council. The company's list includes humour, crime, family, drama, outdoor, literary, travel books and both fiction and non-fiction in translation. The website www.sandstonepress.com features reviews of books, a Home Page twitter feed, and frequently edited news.

Sandstone Press Ltd | DISTINCTIVENESS & STRENGTH

Distinctiveness...? According to managing director Robert Davidson, the distinctiveness of Sandstone Press lies in its location and quality - a publishing company based in Highland, which reaches out to the world through its imaginative and original range of products. 'We are a literary publishing house located in Scotland which is dedicated to producing contemporary quality reading.'

Main strengths...? We have faith in all the books we publish: with a small list, we have to be selective. The list remains small not just because of capacity issues, but because we want every book to be edited and produced to a high standard. People once said it cannot be done from here' - there was a credibility barrier, and we have overcome that.

Sandstone Press Ltd | THE BUSINESS INITIATIVE

Sandstone's initiative for the Project was the development of the whole company, to increase capacity, improve awareness of products and profile, increase sales and move the company into a position where it can employ staff on a full time basis.

As Robert made clear: 'Our reason for wishing to do this is to strengthen our company, make it sustainable, and to be a flagship creative enterprise in the Highlands. We believe that the benefits which would result from our successful participation in The Project would be improved professional practice, increased sales and better access to the resources and investment we need to grow our business.'
When the company applied to take part in the Project, Sandstone set out seven indicators of the company’s success.

1. Increased number of books on publishing programme
2. Acceptance of our books UK wide in the Trade
3. Increased sales on month by month basis over previous years
4. Company premises
5. A staff of at least 2.5 full time equivalent employees.
6. Improved professional practice – e.g. ability to outsource proof-reading etc.
7. Rise in number of visits to website

**Capacity - a major issue**

Sandstone describes itself as a small company with limited resources. Its level of sales income and profit mean that two of its three directors are unable, for financial reasons, to work full time in the business. Sandstone does not have separate business premises, although acquiring them remains an objective of the company. As Robert saw it...'We felt that participation in the Project would provide us with expertise and support to address these issues in positive and creative ways'......refining ideas, planning more effectively, and helping to access more resources than were available to the company, at the time of applying to take part.

Managing Director Robert Davidson summarised Sandstone's capacity issues at the start of the Project.

**People (their experience, knowledge and skills)**

- The Board has a wide experience of project management, financial management, business skills, and partnership working across several fields and has also now acquired considerable publishing experience. Two of the directors are experienced writers and editors, and can therefore gain the respect of authors in order to work closely with them to produce the best possible text for publication. Sales efforts have recently been much increased by the part time input of an associate, and publicity and marketing had been developed by a second part-time associate.

**Time (in addition to ‘the day job’)**

- Only the managing director, Robert Davidson, is full time in the company. The other two directors, Iain Gordon (Company Secretary) and Moira Forsyth (Submissions) fit in their duties where and when they can, mostly in the evenings and weekends. A part-time publicity assistant contributes three hours a day and a sales and marketing associate works on a retainer basis. As Robert Davidson observed...'This means that our involvement in the Project must be carefully planned, and integral to our development as far as possible.'

**Market awareness**

- This was under constant development. The company worked hard to explore, find and test new ways to connect with independent bookshops and the wider public.

**Access to funds** to invest in the initiative

- The company had cash reserves created from earnings and had succeeded in trading at a profit. Low overheads made a substantial contribution to this. But more profit and investment was required to support the future growth of the business, and building capacity was a key factor in this.
Sandstone Press Ltd | WHAT WAS DONE | ROLE OF THE ADVISOR

Sandstone’s successes - in competitions such as the Man Booker prize long listing of its Testament of Jessie Lamb, and in attracting new and established authors - were accompanied by strategic and practical concerns about where it needed to invest time, effort and money to develop the capacity of the business, as a business. As Robert observed:

'I am constantly surprised at how people outside think we are much stronger than we on the inside think we are, in spite of our successes...'

From the outset it was clear to both Sandstone and its advisor Ron Grosset, that in order to secure and sustain the hard won successes it had earned, a robust look at how Sandstone went about its business would be required. In particular, its capacity to deal with the growing demands on the time of its managing director, who, on a day-to-day basis, was dealing personally with all of Sandstone’s responsibilities as a publisher. This was simply not sustainable.

The advisor’s first impressions: of the publisher and the business initiative

Ron Grosset, managing director, Waverley Books

Ron Grosset began with a very useful conversation with all three directors about the background and development of the business. Two topics were of immediate concern to Sandstone:

- production pricing - there was an urgent need to examine buying decisions and get a handle on stock where too much cash was tied up.
- sales representation and sales and marketing.

'Drawing on my knowledge and experience of other small publishers, the mysteries of the traditional production processes and the routes to market, dominate most small publishers’ working day. Uncertainty about value and unrealistic ideas about sales potential are also fairly common among smaller and newer independent publishing businesses,'

'The impression I took from my first meeting with Sandstone, was that its directors seemed happy with their fiction and non-fiction mix of titles, but were eager to improve their buying skills and develop their sales representation. We also discussed the extent to which Sandstone had been the recipient of awards from the Scottish Arts Council (now Creative Scotland). What implications might the anticipated end of this source of underpinning finance have for Sandstone's business model?’

Ron Grosset knew from experience that it would be unlikely for a three-person publishing business, especially one in which two were part-time, to have the necessary skills in every area required of a small publishing business. In the case of Sandstone, he thought that, 'They (the directors) understand the basics but don't have the knowledge or contacts to make a difference.'

In the advisor’s opinion a new business model for Sandstone was required:

- to ensure its stability 'in a world where publishing grants will be harder to come by.'
- based on buying-in skills where required, rather than spending time trying to learn themselves - for example, about production.
His preliminary analysis of Sandstone’s list of 11 fiction titles and 18 non-fiction titles raised some questions about Sandstone’s identity. He felt that ‘These different threads need to be untangled and analysed, and Sandstone must deliver a much clearer message about who they are and what they want to do.’ He offered a challenge:

‘The scene: an international book fair. Sandstone has a 10 minute appointment with a potential international partner. The challenge: put the catalogue down and explain to the potential partner, in two minutes, exactly what Sandstone is.’

But Ron Grosset was equally clear about the strengths that lay within the business and was eager to ensure that these strengths were fully exploited.

‘When the strands are untangled, Sandstone can be a player in fiction. It is in fiction that I believe Sandstone can make its mark - as we can already see from the Man Booker long-listing of the Testament of Jessie Lamb. Robert Davidson, himself a published author, is a man who can write extremely well. I think he has a real eye for a manuscript.

‘But they must focus in the elements of the process they do well and buy-in skills that they lack, as and when they need them.’

The advisor believed that Robert had done a good bit of work on where Sandstone should focus. ‘In part, Bob was seeking confirmation that his own research had led him in the right direction.’ Ron Grosset thought it had and included the need to examine Sandstone’s print buying decisions and get a handle on the levels of stock as there was much cash tied up in stock. While moves had been made on sales and marketing, the advisor felt that more work needed to be done in this critical area.

**The publisher’s first impression: of the advisor and what he contributed**

*Robert Davidson, publisher*

Sandstone already knew Ron Grosset by reputation and from previous conversations before participation in the Project, and had found him to be a valuable source of information and sound advice.

‘As our advisor during the Project, Ron Grosset brought experience the company did not have.’ Robert found this to be....‘invaluable, not only in the information and insights this gave, but also where it usefully confirmed some of our own thoughts. It boosted our confidence. Where we thought we were weak, we turned out not to be as bad as we had thought!’

- Access to our advisor helped to short-circuit the route to knowledge.
- The quality of his advice and support was excellent from the outset.

‘Ron Grosset developed a very good understanding of our business and grasped very quickly what were our real areas of need and we quickly developed a strong and supportive working advisor relationship.’

**The Advisor’s’ contribution and the Publisher’s response**

*Editor’s note*

During the course of the Project, advisor Ron Grosset and Robert Davidson (and, from time to time the other directors, Moira Forsyth and Iain Gordon) met to discuss key issues, usually on the basis of a number of topics agreed in advance. Following these meetings, Ron Grosset would typically set out his thoughts and recommendations and send these by email to Robert, who, in turn, after reflection, would respond.
These exchanges between a highly experienced publisher-advisor, and a hugely committed, intelligent and motivated, though less-experienced publisher, provide a fascinating insight into their thoughtful, constructive and mutually respectful relationship. It was also productive, as Robert described during his exit interview at the end of the Project. Sandstone's relationship with its advisor Ron Grosset was 'the jewel in the crown.'

Employing headings used by the publisher, we have drawn selectively on notes provided by the advisor and the publisher to compile an edited narrative on some of the topics covering during the course of the Project.

**Publishing programme**

**The advisor**

I analyzed their list and identified that within Sandstone's list of 11 fiction titles, there are 3 different strands. In their non-fiction list of 18 titles there are similar strands, with Gaelic interest a further strand. These different threads need to be untangled and analyzed, and Sandstone must deliver a much clearer message about who they are and what they want to do.

- I asked them to imagine that we are down to our last £5000 (no grants). How are we going to spend that £5000 to generate income to survive and provide an income to support three Directors.
- I suggested that investing in another book about *Scottish Mountains*, which will sell locally, slowly, is not the way forward. Nor should they spend on a work of fiction centred on Coatbridge or Inverness.
- I asked Sandstone to imagine I was an international / overseas buyer / potential partner at a book fair with their catalogue my only introduction to their list. Put the catalogue down and explain to the potential partner, in two minutes, exactly what Sandstone is.

I will go as far as suggesting a slow-down on books which have a limited sale with limited interest where there is strong competition from more established publishers.

The strand which I have identified so far as their strongest thread is Fiction – perhaps sourced as translations, and where Sandstone can find material with volume rights, if we can partner with similar publishers in other countries, we would aim to ‘snowball’ in terms of establishing a network of like-minded small publishers particularly in Europe, but perhaps beyond. There are indications that, when strands are untangled, Sandstone can be a player in fiction.

**The publisher**

Our programme for 2012 is moving towards substantial completion, with the first half of the year probably final. *Last Dragon* (the biography of Edwin Morgan) might still be displaced into the second half if a more suitable (for the time of year) non-fiction title appears. Your comments on categories and niche publishing, which are increasingly appreciated by me, must therefore be applied in that extended time frame. We are committed to publishing eighteen titles in 2012 and a momentum has developed which appears to be leading towards something of a fiction loading. This is a rapid change which concerns me somewhat since non-fiction has been generally more reliable in terms of steady sales than fiction.

**Categories and niche**

**The publisher**

Your 'categories' addressed, I thought, mostly fiction, and 'niche' non-fiction. Some more discussion and consideration of fiction categories is in order, but I would say that our thinking is probably in accord. When you look at our back list, please remember that we have been travelling from a certain place to get to where we are. Our earlier publishing was necessarily more random, and the whole quality issue (although built into the company identity) was in development.
Beyond that, categories are likely to be, such as, crime, quality women’s fiction, contemporary fiction, etc. More to the point would be the nature of their appeal. We might almost give this a geography; such as ‘UK’. This comes dangerously close to the notion of ‘too Scottish’ but that may have to be lived with. Certainly we must pay attention to this when we lay out future catalogues and, eventually, redesign the web site.

Non-fiction carries the idea of ‘niche’ more strongly. Our outdoor books are mostly Scottish, indeed mostly Highland, but have served us well and I do have the idea that we should annex as wide an area of the outdoors as we can. There is no reason why this should be uniquely Scottish and could (and does) include books with environmental overlap. I would release this with reluctance. We have also published literary biography (Edwin Morgan) and have the opportunity of another (Jennifer Johnston) and another of W. H. Murray which overlaps outdoors and literary. We have deliberately avoided ‘Scottish heritage’, partly because it is already so well done elsewhere and partly because I feel it is self-limiting. Hamish Brown’s coming book is aimed at the ‘Scots Magazine’ market and may be questionable for that reason.

**Translations**

**The publisher**

I think the 'Goethe Institut' route to Books In German, for translation to English is really something to explore. The idea I expressed to build a network of partners across Europe is something we can start to work on which will help us to focus. I have spoken to Marion Sinclair (chief executive, Publishing Scotland) and asked that we approach Publishing Scotland, when we are ready, to engage with appropriate trade organisations in Denmark, Holland, Poland etc, and find potential partners with a similar profile, so that we can make a start on this. I will also ask Publishing Scotland to explore other countries, to see if similar opportunities exist.

Not all will attend London Book Fair, but some will - or may be persuaded! The China Market Focus and the associated cultural programme (at the London Book Fair) will place a spotlight on contemporary Chinese authors and China as an important publishing arena. The London Book Fair Market Focus initiative is a key opportunity for UK and international publishers to liaise with their foreign counterparts, and seek out and capitalize on new business partnerships."

**The publisher**

I have begun looking into the Goethe Institute as a source of possible translations. With a second title now looking more probable I feel it is likely to be the only translation we publish in 2012. A Goethe sourced title (or more than one) would therefore be on course for 2013.

**The Sandstone Vista Series and Gaelic Vistas**

**The publisher**

We left adult literacy because we had to. Competition from the Quick Reads was too intense and it seemed clear that the mechanisms of the State had chosen those books with some others added, possibly in the interests of appearing to be fair. It should be said though, that we were fatigued by the editing work by that time. If we return to this field now, as all three Board members would like to do, it can only be after a careful consideration of resource against return.

As discussed at our meeting, and about which you have expressed your enthusiasm, the Gaelic Readers are capable of adaptation into the teaching of English from other languages. This whole area of literacy education is extremely tempting but we should enter it with a good deal of preparation and, indeed, a greater degree of sales certainty than we have ever had before.
Focus

The advisor
I think we need to be very cautious - and ruthless - about Fiction and Non-fiction, especially narrow areas of interest, and particularly with Non-fiction, figure out what is niche and what is ‘me too’, and what is simply ‘narrow’.

- A niche market is a focused, targetable portion of a market with a narrowly defined group of potential customers.
- A business that focuses on a niche market is addressing a need for a product or service that is not already being addressed by mainstream providers.
- Being successful with a niche market means finding or developing a market niche that has customers who are accessible, that is growing fast enough, and that is not owned by one established publisher already.

The publisher
To offer some summation of the foregoing, connected with the word ‘focus’ (which comes down to raison d’etre) I offer the following.

- Determine categories of fiction.
- Determine non-fiction niches giving particular attention to ‘outdoors’ and ‘biography’.
- Carefully consider a return to adult literacy in 2013, combining with ‘advanced learning’ in English from other languages.
- Quickly decide if we are to continue in Gaelic.
- Stick to the above, raising quality all the time, and do not be distracted.

E-books

The advisor
A fellow advisor, one who I have tremendous respect for commented "Why don't Sandstone really concentrate on E-books?" I think Sandstone is perfectly poised to ride the Kindle wave. The £89 Kindle will be THE Christmas present this year.

The publisher
I noted your fellow advisor’s comment, ‘Why don’t Sandstone really concentrate on ebooks?’ with (excuse this) a wry smile. We were the first publisher in Scotland to enter the field, innovating furiously and fruitlessly. Just the same, we are very committed and I have been working towards affordability and outreach for years. We now make our ebooks in-house (although)....this function might go to Faber. Soon our entire backlist of fiction, and some non-fiction, will be available on all platforms subject to rights. From February 2012 all of our fiction will appear simultaneously in B Format paperback and ebook, as will appropriate non-fiction. This amounts to ‘really concentrating’ on ebooks. The question is: how to market?

Faber Factory Plus
Sandstone has made very positive progress with Faber - not just in setting up regarding e-books, but with representation.

The publisher
Iain (fellow-Director, Iain Gordon) and I will be travelling to London to meet with Faber Factory Plus....almost certainly to contract to both their e-book management and their new repping (representation) company. The repping arrangement is the more exciting aspect and the Board (ie Sandstone’s Board) is agreed that we must have this, or something like it, to advance into the next stage of UK selling. We have been working towards this for years.
Our fiction publishing, in particular, has been pursued in a high risk fashion with the intention of engineering just such an arrangement. I anticipate that Faber will be an extremely important building block and would want to advance very closely beside them. Without them we would have to reconsider our fiction strategy, probably concentrating on the short run option.

**Print options**

**The advisor**

The production model I am building for Sandstone is a new concept but an idea which allows us to avoid speculating with inventory. It is a 'calculator-based' system, so we can assess the impact of quantity on price and make informed decisions.

Publishers face increasingly peculiar situations. A decreasing number of retail outlets and ever increasing discounts requested on a sale or return basis. Even where a publisher is fairly sure of a print / sell-through quantity based on 'last year' or 'the last book by this author', the market is such that the audience may have moved on, the retailers changed their policy (eg Waterstones 3 for 2 is dropped), or the impact of the Kindle effect.

Let's say the finger in the air says '1,500 copies'. OK, but with a new book, you don't get the benefit of any reviews you might get; ie you have to get through the 1,500 stock before you can reprint with the review printed on the cover / inside.

- You could have other issues where you might regret printing 1,500. This Guardian review for example (not of a Sandstone Book!): 'The most off-putting thing about this touching story is the ugly typeface and the cheap paper it's printed on - undeservedly shabby for an excellent little novel.'
- Or - you got the printed price wrong and want to put the price up!

The idea is to **think** 1,500, but go for a **first** quantity that are your advance / review copies - say 500.

- Then go back for more - say another 500, and if they sail out the door, go for another 500.
- If it all goes to hell and reviews are dreadful you can pull the plug and live to fight another day.
- If it all works out - then great - but beware of the day where you make one reprint too many - when you suddenly discover that everyone who wants the book has got it!
- And then there's the investment. Better to invest in a small number of copies than a large number - for many obvious reasons.

The staggered production is a safety net. But if you have backed a winner, you can reprint, and print again and if you reprint within an agreed period, then the idea is that your print runs will be cumulative (ie 500 + 500 + 500 = 1,500) and a rebate system will operate, so that if you total 1,500, you will end up paying the 1,500 unit cost, not 3 x 500. If your prints are outwith the agreed time period, or you don’t reprint at all, then you will simply pay the 500 rate.

This approach also means that available cash can be invested in say three titles rather than one, which will bring further economies as regards sales and marketing and representation – the rep having three books in the bag rather than one. Reduce idle inventory, reduce stock risk.

This model is of course still producing a traditional paper product but the first phase of the cycle (test and review) can to a certain extent be done via Kindle where a take-up can be measured and provide useful indicators.

Given that Sandstone is at present a stock-holding publisher, I think we should continue with paper product, but more cautiously. Meanwhile crank up the e-book for Kindle side of the business as hard as we can and anticipate a time in the future where, if we have made the right decisions, a reliance on traditional paper product may not be so vital.
The publisher
Thank you again for bringing your print expertise (as well as all else) to this company. It is going
to prove to be tremendously important in terms of both ‘lower costs’ and ‘reduced risk’. I am
sure of that. We will be asking Faber how many pre-orders we can reasonably expect for future
titles, accepting that there is likely to be a wide variance. Asking the same question of another
repping company recently I was told ‘700-750’. This sounded very good to me so I asked Marion
(Marion Sinclair - chief executive, Publishing Scotland) the same question. She agreed. Still
cautious, I asked James Benson (sales associate pre-Faber Factory Plus) who offered a carefully
considered ‘500.’

If true, these figures change our world. They also put a little question mark beside the ‘small
print run’ strategy, although with a programmed run-in, the strategy can be built in as and when
required. My present view (easily dissuadable) is that we are seeking these kinds of pre-orders,
2-3k print runs and short run top-ups.

Focus
The publisher

 Since we are already committed to ebooks, and have our methods of creation and
distribution, how can we best market them?
 Faber Factory Plus will, almost certainly, become a crucial selling tool for us. How can
we best relate to and utilise them?
 What will the knock-on be to our developing print methods?

Sandstone Press Ltd | THE OUTCOME | WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

The publisher’s opinion
Robert Davidson

I am consistently surprised at how people outside think we are much stronger than we, on
the inside, think we are, in spite of our successes - such as long-listing for the 2011 Man
Booker.

Our initiative for this project was the development of the whole company, to increase
capacity, improve trade and public awareness of products and profile, increase sales and
move the company into a position where it can employ staff on a full time basis. Our reason
for wishing to do this is to strengthen our company, make it sustainable, and to be a flagship
creative industry in the Highlands.

Over the period of our involvement in the Project we have increased the number of books on
our publishing programme and we are making progress on sales - professionalized though
our association with Faber Factory Plus. Our professional practice has improved in the area of
production as a result of our relationship with our advisor Ron Grosset. Our success in
competitions makes us more attractive to agents and authors and the number of visits to our
website has increased substantially. We have not yet acquired premises or increased our
staff. More sales and confidence will be required to take these steps, which we recognise are
important.

Overall, we feel very positive about what has been achieved.
The advisor's opinion

Ron Grosset

What the Project has done for Sandstone is to give them the opportunity to take a deep breath and say, 'I have now had help (eg with production issues) and I now know how to handle that.' When you spend too much of your time, worrying about things you don't understand, like production, for example, it takes your eye off the ball. Now they can focus on other parts of the business. In Bob's case, this is to tackle editorial matters - which he does well.

That's a message discussed among the wider group during the Project, and during workshops. Don't be afraid or too niggardly to buy-in services because if you have got a level of trust with suppliers, and confident that they are going to deliver what you need, at a fair price, you can concentrate on what you do best in the business.

Sandstone really has got something to offer. All has come in a relatively short period of time which happily coincided with Sandstone's involvement with the Project.

Sandstone Press Ltd | LOOKING FORWARD

The publisher: on the medium term future

Robert Davidson

We must publish books that people will want to buy.

Our distinctiveness arises from a combination of our international outlook, our attitudes towards fiction and non fiction and our Highland location. Perhaps most important is our international outlook which we have had from the outset.

The combination of our own thinking and the valuable advice we received during the project from our advisor Ron Grosset, has shown that we have to adjust our practice in almost everything we do, with every detail tied down. For example, as Faber is now moving into printing we have to consider what implications this development might have for us.

We are continuing to attract new and better known authors and we are beginning to see that our earliest ambitions actually do have a good prospect of being realised, despite there having been times when this might have seemed impossible: A successful publisher, based in Highland Scotland, reaching out to the world from here.

The advisor: on the medium term future for Sandstone Press Ltd

Ron Grosset

I am very positive. I think that Sandstone can make a mark.

As each month goes by and new titles come to the front of the list, there is more work to be done. Building the capacity of the business will be an important factor in its future success. This will require a new mindset, taking opportunities to bring in freelancers who are not employed full-time. The scale of the business is ideal for sharing resources and new partnerships. Moving premises would also help, providing a more formal business environment for Bob Davidson to work in and this in itself would introduce a new mindset about what Sandstone is, and what it could be capable of as a publisher.

Managing costs is, and will remain an area of risk, that Sandstone will work hard to address but it needs more people on hand to keep things going as opportunities increase, for example in e-marketing and networking.
At some point, and I feel sooner rather than later, Sandstone will have to accept it needs support, and at a junior level. Sandstone doesn't need 'more chiefs' but would benefit from younger people who are also less costly to employ. For example, two interns could be valuable, feeding the managing director with reports on new and unsolicited manuscripts, and also providing proof reading support. There are a lot of publishing skills that a good intern can learn quickly that could have a real impact on the business.

Robert Davidson needs help with the number of hours in the day that are available to do what he needs to do to progress the business.

Sandstone Press Ltd | ABOUT THE PROJECT
Assessment as a vehicle for business development | Lessons Learned | Recommendations

The publisher

1. The approach offered by the Project was a new thing and we enjoyed it.
2. The insights gained as a result of our attendance at the workshops gave us not only information, but a deeper understanding of many issues, than we had had before.
3. Being part of a group enabled us to gain direct knowledge of more people and their companies. Having met them at the workshops, I now feel I can phone them up, and share information and contacts.
4. The opportunity to have access to a wider range of advisors during the workshops was valuable and provides the opportunity for future networking.
5. Our advisor relationship with Ron Grosset was without doubt the jewel in the crown.
6. Overall, our participation in the Project has provided Sandstone with bridges into the wider scene.
7. Two other thoughts. Holding a round table involving all 7 firms at the annual Publishing Scotland conference. And finally, all of the workshops were held in Edinburgh; something to think about for the future – although I accept that for the majority of publishers and advisors, this was the most easily reached location.

The Advisor

1. The key to the Project's success was the workshop structure which enabled the advisors and the participants to come together at three key points in the 6 month programme. Despite differences between the participants, they all had the same problems and solutions suggested by some advisors were inevitably appropriate for adoption by other publishers. For example, the approach to production planning offered to Sandstone, was directly applicable to at least one other publisher, and probably more.
2. This coming together of different publishers who would not normally talk to one another brings a very interesting perspective on why the Project has been valuable.
3. The gaps in time between the workshops and individual mentoring sessions between publishers and their advisors seemed to be a slightly negative issue in some cases. Perhaps the same result could have been achieved in a more compressed timescale than the 6-months? This is of course down to availability and the other professional commitments of both the advisors and the publishers.
4. The timing of the Project straddled the London Book Fair. If we were involved in something like this again, if might be a good idea to look at its timetabling with a view to the Project reaching its climax at a major industry event. A potentially interesting and documentary approach
Value for money represented by the publisher’s investment?

5. Each publisher that took part in the Project had its own reasons for doing so. To take one example, the most mature of the 7 businesses, would be able to account for every penny invested. For others, who have a strong commitment to publishing, I would expect them to feel that their investment was certainly worthwhile, given the support they have received.

Sandstone, I believe, gained a direct return from the tightening up on cash spent on production, and a reduction on warehouse storage charges. For these reasons alone, their investment in the project has been very cost effective.

For all of the publishers involved, a longer view of value for money and return on investment is required.

To many observers, from the very start, the concept of a small independent Scottish publisher having to part with the money (ie the fee of £1,500) to be able to take part in the Project was an interesting idea in itself. If you put your money on the table, then it must mean you are serious. For me, that says a lot about the commitment of the seven publishers who took part in the Project.

A reflection

In mid-November 2011, following earlier sessions with Sandstone, and a round table meeting in Edinburgh attended by all of the advisors of publishers taking part in the Project, Ron Grosset wrote a short reflective note which describes the predicament faced by all publishers - regardless of their scale, experience or track record of success.

‘It is perhaps not a surprise that participating publishers have not all been able to make a clear statement about specific pursuits. The project comes at a time when every publisher is faced with questions which perhaps they did not anticipate.

We are all faced with extremes that we have not experienced before. Whether it is a long established publisher seeking to change a print model to an electronic future, or a small publisher who simply seeks any kind of future, I find myself amidst a development project where practical survival must be the sole pursuit.

I find myself asking the questions that the publisher I am supposed to be mentoring should be asking me.

This is not a criticism of the partner-publisher, but a realization of a quite sudden common predicament. It matters not what scale of operation you have. Whether you are a Canongate or a Birlinn, or a Waverley or a Floris or Saraband, Sandstone or Strident. Or Vagabond Voices or anyone else.

- It matters not how good a title seems because we look out at complete uncertainty. The retail market which we thought we knew is not something we can be sure of any longer.
- The finger in the air to plan a print run catches no wind. No guidance any more.
- Just because the last book sold 3,000 (last year) is no longer a guideline.
- A tour around the Booksource warehouse and every other warehouse in the UK and Europe is proof that last year’s finger in the air is this year’s and next year’s inventory.’
ABOUT THE ADVISOR

A short profile

Ron Grosset


In 1988 Ron was the founding publisher of Geddes and Grosset, specializing in reference and children’s books, books as premiums, custom publishing for export and domestic markets, (including Time Life, Netherlands, Penguin UK, Random House USA, Reader’s Digest USA and Canada). Ron created Waverley Books in 2007 to be a publisher of a wide range of books of Scottish and international interest, such as the acclaimed Graphic Novels - 'Kidnapped' and ‘Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde’ – and was the creator and publisher of Scotland’s fastest ever selling, award winning book 'Maw Broon’s Cookbook'.

Ron has acted in a consultancy capacity for Pearson (UK) / Penguin Books, and RR Donnelly (USA) in relation to their assessment of EU and Eastern Europe manufacturing facilities, their Chinese JV, regarding product prospects and markets and is a consultant to paper mills and print groups in Europe and Asia, as a paper designer and as a production buyer, and sources pre-press, book and magazine work in volume, using conventional and digital printing processes in various countries around the world. Ron has worked extensively with The Scottish Braille Press. The novel 'Mavis’s Shoe' published by Waverley Books 2011 was the first

A specialist in vendor development, Ron advises on economic product design for print media; materials development, procurement and production buying and lectures on these and related subjects in the UK and overseas. Ron chairs the Training Committee of Publishing Scotland and is a Trustee of the Edinburgh Enesco City of Literature organization and a Specialist Advisor to the Scottish Arts Council, now Creative Scotland, and is a full Board member of Publishing Scotland. Ron has represented The British Council, EUCL and Publishing Scotland in India.

ENDS
Case Study

Saraband

Sara Hunt
publisher | Saraband

Will Atkinson
advisor | sales & marketing director | Faber

Donald Boyd
advisor | head of media sector | Campbell Dallas

PANDA

CELLMATES

WOODLANDERS
SARABAND

In summary: the publisher | the business initiative | the result

About Saraband

- Business name: Saraband (Scotland) Ltd
- Year established: 2000 (previously incorporated in USA in 1994)
- Legal status (ownership): Limited company
- Main location: Glasgow
- Ownership: Director-owned limited company
- Type of books published: Illustrated non-fiction (mostly)

About the business initiative

- To help to work out a new business model, budgeting and financial framework
- To strengthen the traditional publishing side with a digital component to each new title
- To implement a new workflow to convert illustrated titles to e-book
- To investigate funding options and market research for innovative e-book and game projects

About the result

THE PUBLISHER

Sara Hunt, director owner & publisher, Saraband

I am confident that we now have a very good start in how to go about working on the digital side by focusing on content. We are not afraid of technology or over-impressed by clever functionalities. The Project was very worthwhile. Mentoring by our two advisors was really valuable and targeted to our needs, in two business areas, where each took a strong interest and made incisive comments.

THE ADVISORS

Will Atkinson, sales and marketing director, Faber

I think Sara has come a long way in the last months we have been talking. She didn’t need anyone to tell her what to do, but may have needed someone to share anxieties. Saraband has made the transformation from a publisher who is reliant on an old illustrated publishing model to one which is essentially prose or narratively driven.

As long as the cash holds out, the prospects are good. Saraband has two key things in its favour. Skills that are relevant for the new environment and an ability to execute integrated publishing for good and relevant content. Large publishers are really struggling to do this. Saraband has the intelligence and speed to do so. The skills and position in the market are there, it is just a question of being able to exploit them.

Donald Boyd, advisor; Partner, Campbell Dallas

The business has edged away from an area where financial viability was risky, although interest in the creative side will obviously remain very strong and is central to what the business is about.

In order to fund and fuel the creative side ideas, there is a good prospect that maintaining the more traditional print model will provide cash to ensure the viability of the overall business as it moves forward. Saraband is likely to have ended up with a more sustainable business as a result of involvement in the Project than might have been the case when it started on this process.
Saraband  | THE BACKGROUND

Established in 2000, Saraband publishes mostly illustrated non-fiction titles as well as producing co-editions for an international market. Releasing about 6-10 new titles per year, its core areas are the arts, reference, history, and the environment. Mostly, these are of international interest, but Saraband also publishes some Scottish and UK-interest titles. Its books are known for their high design and production values as well as engaging writing.

Many of its titles, from art to ancient Egypt, have been co-published worldwide, and some closer to home, like The Garden Cottage Diaries, the ‘riveting story of a rather extraordinary journey’ by an eco-minded woman who recreated the life of a Scottish ancestor, and A Handbook of Scotland’s Trees, published in association with the environmental charity Reforesting Scotland.

More recently, Saraband ventured into fiction, publishing the debut Making Shore, by Sara Allerton, which won the 2011 the People’s Book Prize for fiction and is shortlisted for the Mountbatten Maritime Award.

Saraband now has an active digital presence. It has number of apps available in addition to e-books, and, at the time of involvement in the Project, its work in progress included some innovative digital projects. Saraband’s website, blog and social media streams form an integral part of its activities.

Saraband  | DISTINCTIVENESS & STRENGTH

Creativity and quality are, Sara Hunt believes, central to Saraband’s mission which is, as she describes it, to bring interesting ideas to as many people as possible, in an engaging way. ‘Creativity is the key feature of Saraband’s USP.’

But as the business moves forward, addressing the twin challenges of change and opportunity, how might the decisions that will be made affect Saraband’s hard won reputation and distinctiveness?

Sara Hunt recognizes the dilemma, while remaining convinced that the principles that have guided the business from the early days will continue. For example, by continuing to select subjects that were popular and mainstream, and appealed to a broad audience, but taking a different approach to illustration and a perspective that would be new and appealing.

As an example of this approach, Sara Hunt offers Saraband’s Burns app ‘Something everyone thought they knew and even yawned when it was mentioned! Burns night...boring and so old hat. So, we freshened it up, went back to the essence of what Burns is, and made it more appealing.’

One of Saraband’s advisors on the Project, Will Atkinson, sales and marketing director of Faber, had no doubt about the merit of this approach, as ‘a great example of an integrated digital and print publishing strategy.’ In the Burns app, now being turned into a book, Atkinson finds a striking example of ‘a perennial subject, where Saraband has found, astonishingly, a gap in the market and the ability to market it worldwide for a Scottish Diaspora each 25th of January – the anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns.’

Preserving and extending Saraband’s creatively-driven reputation and distinctiveness, while remodelling a sustainable business, capable of delivering marketable products, profitably, was a dilemma Sara Hunt had been wrestling with for almost two years. The Project provided a safe and timely opportunity to address this challenge, with the support of expert advisors. With hindsight, Sara Hunt wishes the programme had been available to her one year earlier, due to where Saraband had been in its development at that time.
Addressing areas of challenge to the business

Over the two years before Saraband took part in the Project, the company had been exploring and testing approaches to addressing areas of challenge, for itself as a business. Many if not most of these challenges were in areas where the publishing industry itself – both the larger players and the small, independents, like Saraband – was trying to decide on the most reliable response: which way for traditional publishing; how to respond to the opportunities of the digital revolution; which business model or models are most appropriate to secure a commercial return while reducing exposure to risk.

Before the start of the Project in early Autumn 2011, Saraband’s own thinking and investigations had been in the following areas.

Traditional publishing

In response to what it saw as ‘difficult trading conditions

- modest diversification, to include books at lower prices printed in black and white; this brought some success, which the company began to consolidate
- focus on a combination of individual titles the company was passionate about, and a range of core subjects that which Saraband’s own sales records showed had strong commercial track records.

Digital innovation

- extensive use of social media marketing
- developing illustrated e-books
- exploring innovative digital/trans-media ideas

A twin-track approach

By the time of its involvement in the Project, Saraband had decided on a twin track approach involving both traditional and new publishing areas, specifically digital innovations. Sara Hunt believed that ‘Maximum flexibility is essential in the industry today and we need to work on both sides simultaneously.

Traditional publishing: a sustainable business model

For two years before the PROJECT, Saraband had been seeking a shared, collaborative marketing and sales solution so that the company could concentrate on what it considered as its main in-house strengths:

- Creative
- Editorial
- Production

An alliance with a sales and marketing partner had been formed (but later, dissolved) which, at the time, Saraband felt confident would enable it to concentrate on working out a sustainable business model addressing distribution, workload, staffing and budgeting and financial management that was appropriate to its future plans.
Questions remained, however, about the future commercial viability of Saraband’s illustrated non-fiction. The internet revolution gave Saraband’s customers easy access to media rich websites, at little or no cost. Book sales ‘thinned’ compelling Saraband to re-think its strategy for the traditional print publishing side of its business. In the process of reflecting on how it went about its sales, marketing and distribution, Saraband’s awareness of the roles of social media and online marketing grew and the publisher became an early embracer of marketing direct to consumers, rather than to the trade.

**Digital innovations**

Saraband was an early entrant into the digital side of publishing, and around the time the IPad was introduced in the USA with illustrated content for digital media, Saraband was in the early stages of planning for two innovative digital Projects, each combining a book/series and a digital computer/social game.

Sara Hunt feels that the potential of innovative digital and online formats suitable for Saraband are most likely to be found in the example of Faber, which has found broad audiences for mainstream general non-fiction, popular science, history, culture and literature - areas that, Sara believes, ‘best suit our content and skills.’

Thinking about future options for its sales and marketing effort, Saraband had already seen the contribution that direct sales to readers can make, and wanted to find a simple e-commerce solution for its own website. It had been an early embracer of marketing direct to consumers rather than to the trade. However, having seen that major e-retailers like Amazon had already embraced colour e-books, Saraband decided to lower the priority it had initially given to this field.

**Capacity of the business: a major issue**

Capacity is a major issue for Saraband, particularly so as its owner-director is debt-averse and describes herself as ‘more comfortable keeping overheads low.’ Her intention, at the time of the Project, was to address the capacity issue imaginatively rather than trying to build a larger staff and move out of its small office within a shared creative industries building, into larger and more expensive premises.

Saraband’s initial strategy, in 2011, included:

- Training up a core all-rounder
- using strategic partnerships for digital work
- engaging steady freelance expertise for design
- acquiring two co edition titles
- maintaining a range of quality new titles, while recognizing that Saraband itself lacked the capacity to create them all from scratch
- relying on its alliance with a new partner to develop sales and marketing
- freeing-up time for Sara Hunt personally to devote to the creative, editorial and Project development side of the business, and manage the new business model
Saraband | WHAT WAS DONE | ROLE OF THE ADVISORS

Saraband’s two advisers brought, between them, a breadth and depth of experience and skill, covering both traditional print publishing and digital innovation. They also contributed a sympathetic, but robust, strategic and business perspective on Saraband’s future business model and the challenges it faced. But what were the advisors’ first impression of the publisher and Saraband’s business initiative?

The advisors first impressions: of the publisher and the business initiative

Will Atkinson, sales and marketing director, Faber

Sara has a strong sense of herself and her abilities as a publisher. She is thoughtful about herself, her business and the publishing environment within which she operates. My first impression was of a person who just needed to be exposed to as much as possible. It is a small company and therefore any other form of informed publishing discussion was going to be valuable to her. The company needed more points of coordinate to measure themselves against and a general exposure to what was going on in today’s publishing. This wouldn’t matter so much, but Sara felt that Saraband would have to change gear to survive, so doing the same old thing with a tweak was not going to work.

On one side there is an extreme self confidence in the environment in which she operates through previous success and track record, and a high intelligence, but also, on the other side, a lack of confidence in the role her company can play in British publishing. Knowing who you are and what you can do is very powerful, and not to be taken lightly. So, playing to that strength, the major thing I probably did was just to say, “if it feels right it probably is.” as it comes from a certainty in the skills of the publisher. The thought processes at Faber are similar.

Donald Boyd, partner, Campbell Dallas

In my professional practice, I had not previously dealt with many book publishers and my focus had been on the field of digital innovation, including games applications. In fact I had no previous knowledge of Saraband, prior to my invitation to be a guest speaker at the first workshop of the Project, on the subject of financial planning. After my presentation, Sara spoke with me and that led to my subsequent involvement as one of Saraband’s advisors.

In the course of my background research into Saraband, before our first formal meeting, I found myself drawn to its back-list. Very impressive, and especially for me, the quality of the coffee-table titles. Based on the product, I recognized the company had a strong pedigree and a very creative person, with high standards, running it.

Our initial meeting demonstrated how very enthusiastic Sara Hunt was, and how much she was really up for change.

We discussed the state of the industry which had struggled over recent years and was now dealing with both the challenge and opportunities of the digital world; especially the influence and impact of Google and Amazon, who are now established as major players in the industry. Sara was, from the outset, very much up for the challenge. She recognized that reliance on the printed book alone was unsustainable as a business proposition, if Saraband was to go forward.

My initial assessment of her initiative was that she was on the right lines, and she had done a lot of homework. What I felt she needed was a bit of a push to go down a particular path, selecting from the different business models she had herself already researched.
Overall, I felt she needed to be more focused. To use a football analogy, she was trying to play every position on the football park. She had to decide if she wanted to be a goal keeper or a striker. Rather than looking for one overall business model to cover the individual initiatives she had considered, my view was that each of the major initiatives required a different business model.

**The publisher’s first impressions: of the advisors and what they contributed**

**On Will Atkinson**

*First impressions*

Will is an extremely experienced, widely known, respected and successful figure in the publishing world. His position as a key player in a very well established and influential publisher (Faber) means that he is well informed and therefore well placed to encourage or discourage ideas presented to him.

He understands the wider context of publishing culture as well as obviously, due to his role as sales and marketing director of Faber, being very commercially focused. Will believes in the value of mentoring and collaboration, and this was reflected in the way he approached the provision of advice and guidance to me, during the Project.

In some respects, Will’s focus was at the opposite end of the spectrum from Donald Boyd’s contribution; Will focused more on the traditional print side, while also being supportive of Saraband’s digital aspirations and plans.

*Focus of his contribution during the PROJECT*

Drawing on his professional and commercial experience, Will was well placed to assess our ideas and their viability - in the realms of both traditional print and digital innovations. He was also able to make informed comments on what we were actually publishing at the time.

For our ideas and current work in development, he contributed views on:

- how commercial are they in this changing publishing world?
- are they sufficiently interesting as areas of specialism
- are they the best for list building?

Will’s position enabled him to facilitate access to other Faber colleagues, including Henry Volens, Faber’s head of digital. Henry listened carefully and commented on Saraband’s ideas for digital innovation and was helpful and enthusiastic. He also offered feedback on one of our significant digital Projects, the Burns app.

Henry Volens confirmed that the value in digital Projects results from the quality of the idea and content, and less so in the ‘bling’ of special functions. He also offered useful guidance on areas where mistakes tend to occur, and what to avoid.

Will Atkinson, and his Faber colleagues made valuable contributions: strategically, practically and commercially.

**On Donald Boyd**

*First impressions*

Donald is a highly experienced accountant and a specialist in digital start-ups. It was clear from the outset that he thought ‘the book’ is dead and that conventional publishing will not last. From our first meeting he urged me to embrace the digital revolution as fast as possible.
His no nonsense, practical experience on how to put together a business plan, and a viable structure for digital projects, showed how valuable his contribution as an advisor would be. Saraband already had ideas about what it hoped to achieve, but ‘we were not clear about how to construct appropriate revenue models and costs that would enable us to develop our digital ideas. We knew that Donald could help us do this. And he has.’

Focus of his contribution

Donald quickly got to the point, taking the ‘show me the money’ approach.

As an individual, Donald is interested in cultural ideas. In his personal opinion, Saraband has a lot to offer creatively. For the purposes of the Project, however, and the aims of Saraband’s business initiative, he focused his contribution on where the revenue and profit from our books and digital Projects would come from. He was less interested in the subjects of literature and writing, for their own sakes.

- He quickly understood the business issues and the challenges
- He recommended strongly that Saraband went into digital
- He recommended capitalising on the start we had already made in our digital innovations
- Overall, he was positive and encouraging, urging the company to ‘get on with it’

The publisher’s view: any ‘conflict’ between the views of the advisors?

Will Atkinson thinks digital and legacy publishing (ie conventional print) can work side by side, and that is of course what I want to achieve. He also thinks there is merit in publishing different kinds of content across different platforms and media.

Donald Boyd thinks that Saraband should scale down traditional book publishing as he thinks the days of immersive reading are past. He also questions the value of retaining smaller mid-list titles as he thinks that that books of this type are now more likely to be done on a self publishing basis at margins that conventional publishers would be unlikely to compete with. Donald also takes the view that the traditional approach (print publishing) is unlikely to be a sustainable business model, even for large publishers.

The Advisors’ contributions: what they did, and why

Will Atkinson

Sara’s business is one that relied heavily on a model that is no longer available. In previous years illustrated books could be packaged for different languages and customers again and again, and it was a model developed by Paul Hamlyn in the early 70s. Sara had done well and had a good virtuous circle of product, experience, authors and clients. As the high street booksellers collapse around the world (Borders U.S. were capable of taking 10s of 1,000s of one title), and some types of books were made redundant by modern technology, Sara was looking at becoming less exposed to the pitfalls of this type of publishing whilst at the same time keeping an eye out for opportunities. As we looked through the 2012 and beyond publication schedule, it looked something of a mess. Books on this that and the other plus some illustrated non-fiction, fiction and soft reference. Fine for a large publisher with ranked divisions and world reach, but dangerous for a smaller business. We all have to stand for something and if a limited publishing schedule is stretched across many different areas, it is hard to get a name for anything. Most small publishers are niche for a reason.
All the books were there for a good reason and we talked about the different strands to the publishing: illustrated, Scottish, environment and some fiction with the odd non-fiction title thrown in. However, the point that was coming through again and again was that Sara and the rest of the team were at ease and adept at the digital world and the opportunities that it presented for their content. This was something that was a major strength and that was unusual. The key being skills, a mindset and flexibility with enough resource and cash to capitalise. Hurrah. Becoming known as a clever publisher in this area would have enormous kudos and would add strength across all of the publishing. My reservations around the eclectic sense of the publishing - shared by Sara - disappeared. Here was something to seriously work at; and, guess what, there were good old fashioned skills around illustrated publishing that would harmonise with digital.

A new sense of self confidence was borne. When Sara was in London she spent time with Henry Volens, Faber’s Head of Digital Publishing, so that she had someone to talk with who is focused on that one thing. Faber’s digital strategy is to do very little, very well. Our apps are prize winners and take the front page of the Culture sections when they are released; and they all make a lot of money. He would also give some feeling of camaraderie in that this area is still embryonic, so right and wrong don’t necessarily figure, but relying on your publishing strengths and the skills in-house are vital and that is what we would have reminded her to think about.

I think Sara has come a long way in the 12 months that we have been talking. She didn’t need anyone to tell her what to do, but may have needed someone to share anxieties with. The book industry is going through the most significant change probably in 550 years, so having established and larger companies around to talk to is emotionally valuable. Reminding ourselves that intelligence and speed are vital qualities right now and that this is our main advantage over our corporate competitors, is essential work, and this is likely to be the main value that we brought to Sara.

Donald Boyd

Main focus of intervention

My main focus was to try to get under the skin of the creative idea to find a path that could be translated into a business model. Working with creative people, there is often a conflict between the attention devoted to creativity and to financial viability. While there may be richness in the ‘art’, their attention is not always applied to profit and the balance sheet.

The central issue was how Sara could grow the creative business while ensuring its financial viability, providing her with funds to contribute to move it forward and invest in other projects, over time. She already had a lot of the building blocks in place. What I felt she needed was to better understand how to put it all together, and reach informed decisions about paths not to go down.

A view about the potential of traditional publishing and digital

Look at the High Street. When I was a kid we had lots of independent bookshops. Being a Paisley boy, we even had a Hatchards in Paisley town centre. Now, you have very few street level outlets for the purchase of traditional books, plus the threat of self publishing. Previously, the many steps required to get the book out the door, including cost, was a real barrier to entry. Now, these barriers are no longer there. It is a crowded landscape out there, with the competition leading to poor margins and poor returns. Overall, I thought that, on its own, the traditional print route would be a difficult model to move forward. A very similar scenario to that of the decline of the traditional music record industry. There are, however, great opportunities for people who have good content ideas, and who are willing to change.
**Fewer outlets and the rise of Amazon**

Amazon increases availability to the consumer, and increases the competition. As a consumer this is attractive: you can easily get any title you like. On the other hand, from the business perspective of a publisher, this drives down margins and reduces profit. Also, as in any other industry, the dominance of a major player – in this instance, Amazon - in the market place is not healthy. Given the dominance of Amazon, it is for those who both know their way around the market place, and how to deal with Amazon, who will go forward with a better chance of success.

**Digital Projects: management issues and vulnerabilities**

Digital Projects present real challenges to capacity, cost, risk and technology, and especially to a business of the scale of Saraband. My experience over the last 15 years with businesses operating in the fields of video games and software development, has taught me that this is a risky industry.

Investing a significant sum initially has been the path to ruin for many businesses. So I was keen to ensure that Sara was de-risking her projects so far as was possible. Therefore, in each of her planned digital projects, the route I recommended was delivery through collaboration with significant publishers who have the resources to support what could be a financially risky venture. Or to collaborate with Creative Scotland and other bodies to gain assistance to join with others and, through collaboration, de-risk the venture, as much as possible.

One important message I offered to Sara at our initial meeting was not to go down a full business plan route that would attract debt, through equity funding; I didn’t think this was appropriate to her business, certainly at the stage it was at. It was, in my view, more appropriate that she should collaborate on investment in her projects with others. A solo venture would simply be too risky for the size of her business, risking her business’s assets, and other people’s money on what were speculative ventures.

**Saraband | THE OUTCOME | WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?**

**The publisher’s opinion**

Saraband has moved on a long way during the Project. The process has been successful and we now feel we have more focus.

Donald’s very specific advice on the financial side of digital projects has had a direct and immediate impact. As a result of his encouragement, we went ahead and put effort into our first app. We had the confidence to do this under our own control, compared with a previous example where the actual development was done outside our business.

The results from that app have been very encouraging and represents a giant leap forward for Saraband.

- successful downloads
- positive blogging and reviews
- a successful concept
- effective execution, publishing and marketing
- good data gained from the UK and overseas

Now we have a foot in the door to know how to monetise that app.

- contacts offered
- a springboard to more ideas and how to budget for future digital projects.
- from Creative Scotland, the award of an innovation fund soft loan
- can we now make affordable small scale apps with book content and roll that out so that other publishers in Scotland can do the same?
Will Atkinson mainly focused on the print aspect of our business and has guided us on ways of pursuing a strategy for publishing digital and print versions of a title. From his advice we now feel more focused on when and how to time their introduction and how to cost them - all critical to getting the planning and delivery right.

The accumulated experience of Faber has been shared with us in a way that has been extremely valuable.

- It has taken account of the wider creative and cultural dimensions of publishing
- as well as the specifics of sales and marketing channels
- enthusiasm for our ideas, coming from such an informed source, has been very supportive.

The advisors' opinions

Will Atkinson

Sara says that the Burns app that she released was as a result of an early conversation with me, but it was well on the way before then. Whatever the time frame, the Burns app has had a new release and is now being turned into a book. A great example of an integrated digital and print publishing strategy - still relatively rare. What we have is a perennial subject where Sara has found, astonishingly, a gap in the market and the ability to market it worldwide.

We identified a project with major potential, which would work well both in book form and had a compelling digital content. Moreover it has an in-built media partner, so there is an already made fan base. It is likely that we have held that back slightly to ensure that its launch has maximum impact.

This is a genuinely integrated physical and digital publishing project, and will develop Saraband's ability to attract similar projects. It offers the business a high status project which allows the business to focus whilst continuing to publish in other areas - thus solving the issue around too diffuse a publishing programme.

Finally, Sara has made the transformation from a publisher who is reliant on an old illustrated publishing model to one which is essentially prose or narratively driven. This will allow her to take a good share in e-book revenue too. If there are projects which have a digital component, there is now enough track record to feel that it is worth spending the time and money developing this area.

Donald Boyd

Sara Hunt has achieved a lot of what she set out to do. During the initial meetings there was a lot of uncertainty about which road to go down.

The positive for me – and for Saraband – is that now there is a distinctive focus on three specific pieces of digital content, each with a different business model.

Traditional print has not gone away. This has not been an exercise in turning a traditional book publisher into a video games or digital content provider overnight. Ultimately, there is still a market for traditional books of the kind that Saraband had published in the past, and continues to publish
Saraband | LOOKING FORWARD

The publisher: on the medium term future

Personally, I am confident that we have a very good start in how to go about working on the digital side.

- focusing on content
- not being afraid of technology
- or being over-impressed by clever ‘functionalities’

I am more comfortable with the digital side than I have previously been and the experience encourages us, on the creative side, to explore new ways of thinking about how to deal with our subjects. For example, new ways of looking at art; new perspectives on how we might treat Darwin’s Voyage of the Beagle. Taking a fresh look at the role and lives of pioneering women who lived in the American West.

On the traditional print publishing side of Saraband’s business, we now have a better understanding, and a more considered and better informed view about:

- how the trade is changing
- the need to be less optimistic about the prospects of the trade side
- the need to be absolutely realistic
- the dominance of Amazon
- the extent and consequences for book selling of the growing polarisation between the best independent bookshops and the ‘supermarketisation’
- the likelihood that we will do more special and increased sales through social media
- the need to be very efficient in the application of our skills

In spite of these positive changes, we are confident that Saraband’s core values have been maintained and enhanced by the process. For example, we appreciate the value of making our apps more fun and more accessible. More widely we see the benefits resulting from getting people interested and reaching a wide audience through social media, rather than looking only at a very targeted audience for something (like our Burns app) that had not existed before.

The advisors: on the medium term future for Saraband

Will Atkinson

As long as the cash holds out, then yes, the prospects are good. Saraband has 2 key things in its favour. Skills that are relevant for the new environment and an ability to execute integrated publishing for good and relevant content. Large publishers are really struggling to do this. Saraband has the intelligence and speed to do so. Since the start of the Project, Saraband has joined up with Faber Factory Plus as a selling service and this will aid Sara’s exposure to good market intelligence from that team. It should also boost her access to UK customers and her position in the market, although this wasn’t part of the original plan!

The issue that Sara faces - and that goes for all of us - is simply about the lumpy nature of revenue and resource. Making a high grade app can take time and the monies may not flow for many months. Similarly with the big project. So her ability to affect real success may be more about the right amount of cash at the right time. The skills and position in the market are there, it is just a question of being able to exploit them.
Donald Boyd

Change has been positive and observable. Sara already had a very positive attitude towards change and this made the process of thinking things through much easier. She was quick to realise what was not working well for her and she was not afraid to stop doing things and pursue other, potentially fruitful avenues.

Saraband is now a more sustainable business going forward. The business has edged away from an area where financial viability was risky, although from a creative point of view, interest in it is likely to remain. In order to fund and fuel some of the creative side ideas, there is a good prospect that maintaining focus on the traditional print model will provide cash that could ensure the continuing viability of the business as it moves forward.

We have ended up with a more sustainable business as a result of involvement in the Project, than might have been the case when it started.

Saraband | ABOUT THE PROJECT

Assessment as a vehicle for business development | Lessons Learned | Recommendations

The publisher

As a vehicle for business development

Very worthwhile and of value to Saraband. Wished the programme had been available one year earlier due to where we were in our development at that time, especially the availability of a mentor.

Mentoring (by advisors): really valuable and targeted to our needs; having more than one advisor was really valuable in two business areas; each took a strong interest and made incisive comments. On the otherhand, the continuity provided by one advisor available to us throughout the Project might have provided more continuity, which would have been very helpful.

Workshops: increased in their value to us, over time. The first workshop did not chime with our needs at the time. Although right for some, the Nielsen presentation was pitched at a lower level than was really useful for an established publisher like Saraband. The sessions on change, with larger organisations as examples was, again, for us, less useful, although very interesting. The second workshop was much more relevant to Saraband’s needs, including the very interesting session on the role of non-executive directors - something that Saraband is now considering. For Saraband, the third workshop was the best for our needs with Rob Nichols from Constable Robinson offering something quite different and a successful and positive model for monetising a publisher’s website development.

Overall, for us, the third workshop in particular provided the most thought provoking and interesting day. Inevitably, the specific interests and needs of each of the publishers taking part were different, to a greater or lesser extent, and there was always going to be something of more or lesser interest to each of us, at each of the workshops

On Project Management: you helped keep everyone on the rails; you hectored people into responding; you did this very well. Your communication is very clear and timely.

Lessons learned?

- More lead time, start the advisory process earlier than workshops. The ‘magnificent 7’ has kept in touch – and some business to business connections have resulted, adding a further benefit resulting from the Project: ongoing learning about one another for advice and opinions.
If the advisory process had started ahead of the first workshop, more information about publishers’ interests and needs could have been fed back by advisors – and publishers – into the selection of content for the first workshop. The very positive response by all 7 publishers to the content of the second workshop – which had been developed through a collaborative process with the advisors, who also were presenters - demonstrated the benefit of this approach.

An advisor

Donald Boyd

As a vehicle for business development

A very appropriate vehicle, especially to support the small businesses that took part in the Project, who could easily have been quite intimidated by a traditional consulting-type of environment.

The sense and spirit of community of Scottish publishers was very apparent from the moment I walked into the room at the first workshop. That sense of community, and the friendly environment, was very appropriate for what are, at the end of the day, very small businesses. It hit the mark.

The access the Project provided to the various skills sets of the range of advisors was another important feature and contributing factor to the success of the Project. It provided ease of access for the small publishers who were involved.

Passion and profit? Resolving the tension? A challenge for the creative industries. Any business that is creative needs to realise that sometimes you have to do some work that goes against every grain in your body and your desire to make use of your creative talents. It means viewing the business aspects of the activity as necessary means to an end, to support production of the highly creative work - that may not necessarily be the most profitable work.

My own passion is golf. My business is accountancy gives me the resource to indulge my passion.

Lessons learned?

▪ More focus on the viability of businesses? Worth considering. Difficult to say anything against the Project because it is exactly what the creative industries need. The emphasis on collaboration, community – and not one man bands looking for large sums of money from angel investors to chase a dream. That doesn’t necessarily work. What does work is collaboration with your own community.

▪ Value for money? Investing in small businesses with the kind of approach taken in the Project, compared with more conventional training courses? A focused group approach is much more likely to result in an impact from both a creative and profitability point of view. The ambition must be to grow creative businesses of this type so that, in the future, they can employ graduates and others.

▪ There is a time and a place for other forms of development tools, including training, but that can be dealt with in other ways.

▪ Working with a focused group is the best way to run a Project like this - provided strict criteria are applied to those applying to take part, and selecting people who are open to change and have the necessary mindset to drive their businesses forward.
ABOUT THE ADVISORS

Short profiles

Will Atkinson

Will Atkinson has worked at Faber since 1994 in a number of positions and is now sales and marketing director. Previously he worked at Waterstones in a number of management roles. Now closely identified with the independent sector, having led the sales side of the Independent Alliance since 2005 and as chair of the IPG in 2008 and 2009. Will won the industry achievement award in 2008 and won another Book industry award in 2004 for sales person of the year. In recent years Faber has expanded its services to independent publishers through the establishing of Faber Factory, a digital service and Factory Plus, a physical sales service. Will served on the board of the Edinburgh Book Festival from 2000 to 2005.

Donald Boyd

Donald trained with a Big 4 Accountancy Firm specialising in large company audits. He qualified as a CA in 1998 and continued his career with KPMG within Transaction Services. Donald joined Campbell Dallas in January 2002 following a spell in industry as Financial Controller of GE Aircraft Engines in Prestwick. Here he gained valuable commercial experience in an operational finance role. He now puts this practical industry experience to the benefit of his clients primarily in the owner managed sector. He is very much a ‘hands on’ accountant advising businesses on strategy and the fact that it is just not about a set of accounts and a tax bill at the end of the year.

Donald is the head of the Media Sector at Campbell Dallas where eventually he has been able to combine a personal passion with his work. As he qualified in 1998, Donald witnessed first hand the first dot-com bubble and puts much of this experience to his Media clients today. Donald has advised many businesses in this sector in the last year including video games, magazine publishers, digital media companies, various agencies, creative arts and animation. Donald was awarded the “Young Accountant of the Year” title at the Scottish Accountancy Awards 2011.

ENDS
STRIDENT PUBLISHING LTD

In summary: the publisher | the business initiative | the result

About Strident

- Business name: Strident Publishing Limited
- Year established: 2005; the first title was published in 2007
- Legal status (ownership): Private Limited Company
- Main location: East Kilbride
- Ownership: 100% owned by the director, Keith Charters
- Type of books published: Fiction for ages 7-12; teens and young adults; adult

About the business initiative

- Expand exporting beyond Australia to other areas, including USA and South Africa
- Non-organic expansion; a step-increase in scale - via acquisition, merger or alliance
- Step-growth in turnover and profitability to secure the business’s long term future

About the result

THE PUBLISHER

Keith Charters, director, Strident Publishing Ltd

A very positive result. From the short term and challenging position the business was in at the start of this Project, we continue to trade. We now do things more successfully. Our sales volume is up and our profit margins have improved, partly by reducing our front end costs. The risks to the business resulting from an unsuccessful title have been reduced by printing smaller initial runs. Together, these improvements enable us to plan to grow the business more quickly as we now have less money tied up in stock. By increasing the number of titles, and by planning our print runs more efficiently, we are reducing our exposure to risk. At this point, at the end of our involvement in the Project, we have recovered our momentum and the business is on a much more secure platform, and it is a platform for growth. We are finding ways to progress and avoid standing still, and people are keen to see what’s coming next. We have a target for 3 years ahead. It is an ambitious target that we think is achievable.

THE ADVISOR

Willie Anderson, consultant, Crossburn Consultancy

I have thoroughly enjoyed my work with Keith Charters. He has been wonderfully receptive and the experience of working with someone so positive and entirely realistic of his position, has been really energising. Progress has been made and a lot has been achieved over the past few months. Strident very definitely has a future. The business now has a structure and a realistic plan of where it wants to be and how it can get there. Cash flow is now being well managed and a flow of titles is about to be unleashed. The one area where Keith Charters will not compromise is on the quality of his publishing. He is not publishing 10 titles because he was advised to do so, but because they are worth publishing. We have agreed that I will continue to work with Strident in a non-executive capacity for at least the next 12 months. This should help to consolidate Strident’s position and continue the work that has already been started.
Strident Publishing | THE BACKGROUND

Established 2005, Strident Publishing specialises in fiction. Strident claims 'Our books are bold, modern and cry out to be read...and discussed. We publish for the 7+, 9+, teen, young adult and adult crossover markets and work extremely hard at marketing our titles.'

Strident won early success when its first title, D A Nelson’s Darkisle, won the ages 8-11 category of the 2008 Royal Mail Awards for Scottish Children’s Books; subsequently this title has been licensed around the world. In 2010, Linda Strachan's teen novel Spider won the Catalyst Award, and Gillian Philip's Rebel Angels series (of which Firebrand, Bloodstone and Wolfsbane are books 1, 2 & 3) was sold to Tor in the USA in a major deal, as well as to several other territories.

'These books characterise our approach: we seek out high quality, accessible fiction that has strong commercial potential, always with an eye to the international market but conscious of our domestic territory too. We are not constrained by a particular world view and are willing to embrace the controversial, as our recent publication of Janne Teller’s Nothing attests.

'Our list includes titles by award-winning, shortlisted and bestselling authors including Gillian Philip (Firebrand, Bloodstone and Bad Faith) Linda Strachan (Spider and Dead Boy Talking), Catherine MacPhail (Granny Nothing), DA Nelson (Darkisle), Keith Charters (Lee and the Consul Mutants), Paul Biegel (The King of the Copper Mountains,) Emma Barnes (Jessica Haggerthwaite: Witch Dispatcher and How (Not) To Make Bad Children Good) and Janne Teller (Nothing)

Strident Publishing | DISTINCTIVENESS & STRENGTH

Keith Charters is very clear and confident about the distinctiveness of Strident.

'Despite our small size (a core of 2 people, both working from home), we have a reputation for picking strong titles and marketing them energetically. '

The main strengths of the business principally lie in 'the team', including freelancers, and what Keith Charters regards as its 'low-cost, flexible (no office, no employees) model. He is also clear about what he thinks Strident is good at.

- Attracting high quality titles in the first place
- Picking titles that sell
- Negotiating the rights to them
- Producing books with high production values
- Marketing/selling energetically - and effectively given Strident's very limited resources

Strident Publishing | THE BUSINESS INITIATIVE

The initial idea

For Strident, the opportunity to take part in the Project came along at a good time. After almost five years in business Strident recognized its strengths and also where it needed to build its capabilities and how it went about its business, where, it conceded, its approach was more ad hoc than it should be. In summary:

- There was a need for step-growth - the business was too small to have a realistic future
- What did the business need to change about how could it affect those changes?
- Recognized the need to have better business controls in place
- Saw scope to expand overseas - but how to secure effective distribution?
The first meeting between Keith Charters and his advisor, Willie Anderson, took place in early September, 2011. Strident's needs and aspirations were discussed and initial ideas on a development plan were mapped out. These covered:

- **Economies of scale** - with option including taking over another publisher's list and developing it alongside Strident's own list; pooling resources in administration, marketing and production with other publishers who are not competitors; the need for clear lines of control from the outset
- **Publishing structure** - a clear and carefully calculated publishing plan for the next 12-months, and beyond, that would be manageable (given Strident's limited staff resource), linked to a number of titles
- **Capacity-building** - how to free-up the time of the director and (part-time) editorial assistant to enable them to focus on their value-adding roles, by employing another person to cover day-to-day operational tasks

By the end of the first meeting, Strident and the advisor had agreed the main issues to be addressed and how they would be tackled. Everything seemed in place with the prospect of a plan emerging that would enable Strident to grow effectively.

**Addressing a sudden and critical problem**

By the time Strident and its advisor met for the second time, two months later, the scenario had changed dramatically and in ways that threatened the business's survival: cash flow.

By a cruel coincidence, around the same time the Project was starting up, Strident's Australian distributor (upon whom much effort had been invested, and upon whose performance much was expected) closed overnight, 'sucking cash flow out of Strident' which, Keith Charters estimates, 'lost Strident one year's worth of overseas income.'

Keith recognized that cash flow was inadequate unless action was taken and a financial plan to address the problem was urgently required. As he said...'It was imperative to get through the difficult time, but equally, I knew this would be needed anyway for our medium to long term plan.

**Strident Publishing | WHAT WAS DONE | ROLE OF THE ADVISOR**

**A strategic plan for the way forward**

The onset of the critical cash flow problem reinforced the need for Strident to take a hard look at its approach to business and the importance of putting in place a structure and plan, and a budget to support it.

The initial objectives for participating in the Project remained in place but with a sharpened focus on a carefully calculated and sustainable plan for the business - with robust measures in place to manage cash flow. 'Looking at our stock, we realised we were massively overstocked. How could we convert this into cash in the short term, and then manage it better over time?'

The particular experience and specialist skills of his advisor, Willie Anderson - formerly a leading book retailer - were viewed as invaluable and timely by Keith Charters.

'Willie's experience in managing stock and cash flow was timely and very helpful. Having him alongside at that critical time gave us more confidence. It encouraged us to be bold, to survive and move forward...and not just tinker at the edges.'
The advisor's first impressions: of the publisher and the business initiative

Willie Anderson, consultant, Crossburn Consultancy

My first impression of Strident was of a company starting out, a fledgling project that had very little in the way of resources but very much wanted to succeed. Strident knew where it wanted to go, but not how to get there. There was not enough awareness of the market or the degree to which the publishing industry was changing.

My first impression of Keith Charters was of a man who was very enthusiastic and articulate, aware of his strengths and with a real passion for what he wanted to do.

Keith is very focused on writing for teenagers and he knew this was something he could exploit and work on. He was very focused on books and the 'product' but less so on the business. Strident, it was clear to me, was one person's dream. It was also a very, very small business which he was keen to develop - but essentially, on his own. How, I wondered, did he make a living from publishing?

Overall, I had a very positive first impression. In my experience, people who want to learn, listen; and Keith listened. He had been successful in his previous career, but publishing is different and the return on investment is slower. From a business perspective it was clear that he needed help to prioritise, as well as introducing proper business controls. Overall, my sense was that the business, which is essentially Keith Charters, focused on what was best known - that is, the books - and had tended to neglect area about which less was known: that is, the business.

Strident has a clear vision. It wants to be a publisher of books of quality and this is a consuming passion, but, at the start of the Project, it only had a vague idea of a business plan - a common feature of small publishing businesses. It is of course difficult for a very small enterprise with no one to talk to and it is exactly in such circumstances that a view from the outside can be helpful.

Throughout the duration of the Project Keith demonstrated that he was not averse to challenge and he never became defensive.

The publisher’s first impressions: of the advisor and what he contributed

Keith Charters, director, Strident Publishing Ltd

The fact that Willie had not actually been a publisher was never an issue. What was important, and where he contributed most, was in encouraging me to think about the business.

He went through each of the different parts of Strident's business, questioning everything: why do you do this that way...? He was very forthright and challenging, but also was reassuring when he found we were doing some things right. He pulled things apart, and then we worked to put them together again. How do we spend our money, how could we do this more wisely and more frugally? Strident creates things, but how could we sell them at as high a margin as possible? How do we think about the business?

Willie was very forthright and handled this in a very straight-speaking way. The key thing for me is that Strident succeeds as a business entity and as a brand. And it’s important that my ego does not get in its way.
The Advisor's contribution: what he did and why

The timing of the Project was fortuitous as there was a strong possibility that, due to the cash flow problem, if the necessary focus on figures and structures had not been given, the business might not have survived.

Although not a publisher, the advisor’s experience in business, business structures and book retailing enabled him to quickly understand the issues affecting Strident - both immediate, relating to the cash flow problem, and structural, affecting the business - and apply a rigorous and progressive approach to addressing them.

Key issues at this stage were:

- The structure of the business had to change
- There was no strategic plan
- There was insufficient understanding about the volume of business required to sustain a living - 6 titles per annum is not enough
- A programme for the business was required: a publishing plan to produce a minimum of 10 books in 2012 and more in 2013, progressively building the business
- Urgent need for a structure and a plan for the first 6 months, and beyond
- How do you get through the first 6 months, without any books to publish
- How do you avoid a warehouse full of books you have printed, and need to sell?
- Thinking digital - initially on e-books and Kindle

Even in a testing situation, as Strident was experiencing during the early stage of its involvement in the Project, there are always options and a key part of the advisor’s contribution was his availability to talk them through. The advisor recommended where Keith Charters should focus his attention and effort and it was then down to him to follow-up and sort the issues out on the back of these conversations.

Strident was initially, and understandably concerned about the potentially cataclysmic impact of its large cash flow problem. However, having worked through the figures with Willie Anderson, and gained a clearer view of the options, he realised that things were not quite as bad as he had initially thought.

Necessarily, Strident had to focus, in the short term, on the business. By concentrating on the figures and the structures, Strident gained confidence from feeling that it was in control of the situation. From a recovering position, Strident was then able to devote more attention and energy to a forward-looking publishing plan – one that it could safely deliver and manage, given its very limited resource: essentially, Keith Charters himself.

Despite huge stress, Keith Charters - Willie Anderson recalls - remained very responsive to the recovery and development process and offered no defensive barriers whatsoever. ‘Working with Keith was a joy.’

Strident Publishing | THE OUTCOME | WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

The publisher’s opinion

Have we achieved everything in the 6-month timeframe? No.
Do we think we will, in the longer term? Yes

- The business is now much more controlled
- We are leaner and meaner, but also more ambitious than we were at the start of the Project
- We will produce more books than we might have done because of the changes we have made
- We have changed things around to use our money more efficiently
- Ambitions for USA and South Africa (distribution) have been put back - temporarily
The process we have gone through has boosted our confidence. We could not have done this in isolation. We had to bounce the issues off someone else in order to get the answers we needed. This process gave us both reassurance and the confidence that we could do it. We had to move a few mountains, but the experience provided the impetus that was required to make the changes.

Looking back, the impact of the Australian distributor’s failure, while a major distraction in the short term, actually brought to the fore underlying issues affecting our business. They could not be ignored and required a response.

There remains much that must be tackled and achievement of our ‘road map' will take longer - but at least now the road ahead is clearer and straighter.

The advisor's opinion

Willie Anderson

From the difficult position a few months ago, continued improvements are being made across the business and in every area. From a business point of view there is much to be done and achieved by Strident over the coming months.

The most immediate and obvious success is that Strident is in a more secure position than it was. Keith has a better idea of what has to be done and how to do it. There is the beginnings of a business structure, albeit within the scope of what remains essentially a 'one man' operation.

There is now a very clear understanding of what it means to be a publishing house, rather than simply publishing a few books.

What Strident has achieved over the past 6-months has been down to determined and focused hard work by Keith Charters. His achievements are manifest. There is now a clear understanding that achievement of Strident’s long term aspirations depends on achieving a series of short term goals, and this process is now well underway.

Cash Flow

Effort will now focus on:

- continuing to pare down operating costs
- creating a publishing structure
- reduce capital tie-up
- re-invent the website
- digitise Strident’s titles, including the backlist

Stock Levels

Significant progress has been made on reducing stock levels. Strident has some innovative promotions in place and there are early signs that these are being welcomed by schools in particular. Negotiations have been opened with his main distributor with whom he is working to find ways of reducing distribution costs. Strident is now gearing up for the launch of 10 new titles and careful calculations are being made about the volume of print runs required.

Sales

As nothing new had been published over the past six months, during the period of necessary re-adjustment, and planning, all sales have been coming from Strident's backlist. Now that a forward plan is in place that Strident is capable of managing, and things have settled down, new titles will come on-stream, and with them, a new and heightened awareness of Strident’s publishing. Sales growth should follow.
Publishing

A rolling 18-month publishing plan alongside an 18-month cash flow projection seems about right.

Strident has to market itself by publishing good quality titles, but the marketing effort has to be constant, keeping the Strident name in the market place with new titles at least every two months to maintain awareness. Together with a good backlist, this should drive up sales. And publishing an upper limit of 20 titles in the pipeline is about right; more than that would place excessive pressure on Strident and the prospect of running into logistical problems - given the limited people-resource in the business.

Digital Publishing

Now is the time for Strident to actively investigate digital publishing alongside its traditional printed titles. It is also timely to review and probably reconstruct its website to make it more transactional and functional. This could be a major undertaking.

Strident Publishing | LOOKING FORWARD

The publisher: on the medium term future

Keith Charters

Looking ahead, we feel confident about future sales growth and profitability, and anticipate growing turnover by a factor of around 4-times over the current level. We do not want borrowings from outside the business and so growth will be funded from what we generate. As our advisor Willie Anderson said, 'it is not worth doing if it does not make money.' As a business, we are now feeling secure and I believe that it would take something substantial to throw us off course.

We now have the cost structure right and we have a better position in the market. As a small, flexible and low cost publishing business we can make small volumes work. We can even take some risks, taking on titles that others may have turned down. We understand that our back list needs to pay for the front list, and we know that nurturing the back list will help accelerate it.

Strident is an entrepreneurial publisher. We are aware of the risks we are taking while also being in a good position to make the most of what proves to be successful. We are confident about our direction and prospects in the medium term.

The advisor: on the medium term future for Strident Publishing

Willie Anderson

It will ultimately depend on the product and whether people are going to buy it. Strident plans to have 10 titles on the shelf within a year and if they work, it will be in a good position. But even if they don’t all fulfil their promise, I am confident that it will survive, as a result of the work Keith has put in to stabilise his business, manage cash, reduce operating costs and plan for the future.

Now, Strident is just not just focusing on the trade and like other publishers he recognizes the need to expand and become his own retailer. Developing his website and a multi platform approach to promotion, through the website and social media such as Facebook is another set of tasks on top of the day job and will place demands on him. But Keith has taken all of this on board and my view of Strident’s future is very positive.
The past 6-months of the Project has been a good working experience for both of us and I am delighted that Keith has asked me to continue, on a non-executive basis, with quarterly meetings to go through the figures and discuss progress. We also plan to correspond once a week, by email, to keep in touch and to deal with any issues which may arise. Keith feels there is a benefit to him to have someone available to talk things through - another key feature promoted by the Project.

**Strident Publishing | ABOUT THE PROJECT**

Assessment as a vehicle for business development | Lessons Learned | Recommendations

**The publisher**

6. From a Strident perspective, the Project was a very good way of doing business development - a bit like a part-time MBA. It would have been good for me to have done it in the first year of my business, 5 years ago. A great idea. To have a course to help to make a decision before you go too far down the line. The regular input over a period of time enabled my advisor to observe and comment on progress. The demands of participation in the project were not overly onerous. In fact, it was fundamental to the running of my business and was not an additional burden. It provided me with someone who could help my publishing business become more successful.

7. Values of workshops and advisers? The workshops were good. They forced you into the head space and made you think about ideas and issues, and what you had learned. The case studies that were presented at the first workshop were particularly good. More time on finance might have been useful: covering things that some people don’t think about…eg more about cash flow, ratios, how to measure risk. Also, what other business models are available, in what circumstances might they apply and what costs could be involved? Information of this kind could be important going forward. For example, how does someone put a the business into good shape to sell on?

8. Lessons learned? There is a common problem with any diverse group, as was the case in the Project: who are you pitching the content too….? The Project differs from conventional training, in the pure sense. For a training course, I would think about the training needs of the staff I am putting forward, whereas everyone taking part in the Project was primarily interested in their business.

9. Recommendations? Don’t be afraid to challenge and push the participants. Push us just beyond the point to which you think you can reasonably push us. Everyone wants to succeed. Make it more challenging. Require all participants to prepare a task - say in finance - and have it ready for presentation to the advisor. Keep challenging. The opportunity for access to more than your main advisor could be helpful; at the start of the process you really don’t know what you may require. Speed-dating sessions could be helpful, as even half an hour might produce an idea and a contact that could prove useful, even two years on down the line.

**The Advisor**

1. What on earth is this about was my initial response? But having read the detailed background information I realised that this is exactly what Publishing Scotland should be doing. It might actually help small publishing businesses. It is what trade bodies should be doing. Helping the membership in positive ways, helping the membership to grow as businesses.
2. The Project was a positive and well-structured experience, with an ongoing life extending beyond the six months, for months or even years ahead. It was a tremendous concept. Value for money? Difficult to quantify, but for the level of expertise offered to the companies, it was phenomenal. The first workshop was interesting, but perhaps at a higher level than the actual capabilities of some participants. The second workshop offered content from which everyone learned.

3. The Project provides an example of what a business association should be doing. Being seen to help the membership. As a kick-off, it offers a terrific benchmark for Publishing Scotland to look at. No one can complain they did not gain value for money?

4. The approach enabled each advisor to tailor their expertise to the needs of the business they were advising. Minimal structures suited the process; the right level of regimentation and the right level of freedom. An appropriate level of necessary bureaucracy - no more than was needed, and no less than was required.

5. Lessons learned? Tailoring to allow maximum focus on the individual firm. Main lesson is that members do want help from Publishing Scotland – they want access to people who are independent to talk to; a lot of people out there could do with this. Project has highlighted the issue of resources of some publishers (some have more) many have little. Much to be learned how Publishing Scotland might better serve their members.

6. All participants are at the smaller end – does investment by funders represent best value for money in targeting smaller publishing businesses? What is the best form of investment to make – would the same amount of effort and money applied to support larger businesses with turnovers of £2m, provide better economic outcomes? A difficult question to answer as a higher-end (economically-speaking) company project would probably have had a different kind of focus, structure and content, and the results, similarly different.

7. It is clear that the Project has been extremely worthwhile. Feedback from participants has been very positive. They have learned much and, coming together as an increasingly confident and communicative group, they have realised that they are not alone in the issues and questions they face.

ABOUT THE ADVISOR

A short profile

William Anderson

Worked for John Smith & Son for 38 years, after joining from the Royal Bank of Scotland Ltd as a shop floor assistant in 1973. He was appointed to the Board of the Company in 1979 and became Managing Director in 1994, when the turnover was just under £11m and the Company was then comprised of 12 shops in Scotland and a library supply section. By 1997, the turnover had grown to +£18m, with 14 shops in Scotland and an enlarged library supply section. He led the Management buy-out of the Company in 2000, when he was appointed Chairman. He was instrumental in negotiating the sale of the Company’s shares to Coutts Information Services in November 2001, when he reverted to being Managing Director. He became Deputy Chairman in June 2003 until he retired in March 2011, with the Company having 33 shops and a turnover of nearly £35m.

Outside of John Smith’s, Willie played a prominent role in trade affairs. From 1995 to 1997 he was President of the Booksellers Association of GB and Ireland, when the Net Book Agreement (the NBA was the voluntarily agreement that ensured books were not discounted) was abandoned. He was a Director of the Booksellers Association until February 2011 as well as being Chairman of National Book Tokens Ltd., where he was instrumental in introducing the new Plastic Gift Card. He retired from NBT in February 2011.
He is, since 1998, a non-Executive Director of the Edinburgh University Press. He was founding member of the Advisory Board of the Centre for Publishing Studies at the University of Stirling. From 1989 to 1994 he sat on the Management Committee of the Booker Prize, has been a judge both for the Whitbread Literary Prize and the Macallan Short Story Competition and was a member of the Literature Panel of the Scottish Arts.

ENDS
REFLECTIONS....
.....what has been *achieved*?
.....what has been *learned*?
REFLECTIONS
WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED? WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED?

In this chapter...

- What has been achieved?
- What has been learned? - About the Publishers | About the Advisers | What could be done differently, next time?
- Transferability to other creative industries?
- Implications for Publishing Scotland

Introduction

In this chapter we reflect on the experience of the Project, what it has achieved and what has been learned - by all parties involved.

*Achievement against objective*

The process of planning, designing and managing the Project was undertaken with a set of very clear objectives in mind and it is appropriate that a measured view of what has been achieved - against these objectives - should be taken.

- Through a personalised programme, custom-designed in collaboration with each participating company, the process will help companies to identify, assess, develop and implement a self-initiated business-led project.
- Participation in the Project [aka the in-company development programme] is focused on achieving tangible business growth outcomes for each company.

[Extracts from the launch documentation for the Project - June, 2011]

The nature and extent of achievement by each of the seven publishers who took part in the Project can be judged from the case studies that have been presented in this publication. The evidence is considered again in this section - and against the objective of 'tangible business growth outcomes.'

*Value for money?*

A customised programme of the type and scale of the Project could not have been considered, far less undertaken, without financial investment. The Project was funded from three sources, as well as by Publishing Scotland itself. To what extent does this investment represent 'good' value for money?

- **The 7 publishers**: each of whom paid a fee to participate and individually met their own and other associated costs from their own resources
- **Creative Scotland**: a major sponsor - who regarded the initiative not only worth investing in for itself, but for the evidence it might produce of a potentially transferable model to other creative industries
- **CPI Books**: a major private sector printing company, operating internationally

In summary, the views of these investors suggest that the level of achievement against objective was very satisfactory, and that their investments represented good value for money.
The 7 publishers

As the views of the publishers make clear in the case studies (supported by the opinions of their advisors) their involvement in the Project did achieve their objectives - even if, in some instances, these were revised or elaborated during the course of the Project. While acknowledging the actual costs borne by each publisher, individually, and in addition to the participation fee of £1,500 (for example, for travel and other costs involved in attending workshops, and in one case, travelling to meet their advisor in London) the seven publishers have said that their investment did represent good value for money.

Creative Scotland

Dr Gavin Wallace, Portfolio Manager, Literature, Publishing and language, Creative Scotland

'This brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed project has confirmed three very important things: that in Scotland we have a highly dynamic and diverse independent publishing sector; that the industry needs such diversity if it is to survive; but that companies with such flair and creativity as the 'magnificent seven' involved compellingly demonstrated, need to be willing to develop alternative business models and practices if they are to adapt to the seismic changes which continue to sweep through publishing globally. I salute the willingness of those seven to subject themselves to - sometimes uncomfortable - scrutiny and to scrutinise themselves, the outstanding input and professionalism of their advisors, the commitment shown throughout by Publishing Scotland, and the inimitable rigorous stewardship of facilitator David Pirnie.

As is so often the case in public support for Literature, the project has yielded huge riches and potentially major benefits to other Creative Industries sectors with remarkably modest investment from Creative Scotland. I greatly look forward to continued discussion about the many lessons learned.'

CPI Books

Martin McCall, Head of Digital Content, CPI Books

When the opportunity arose for CPI to be involved in the project, we could see immediately that Publishing Scotland was being hugely innovative. Publishing Scotland was offering publishers a cost-effective, bespoke project based on their individual business needs and issues, with access to the huge wealth of experience that the expert advisors brought. CPI Books has not been surprised by the positive response of the publishers who applied to take part.

It has been great to see how the individual businesses have changed and evolved over the course of the Project and that each of the case studies presented have been such a success. The project will continue to have a positive impact on these publishers in the coming months and years and CPI are delighted to have been such an active supporter of the Project.
Transferability?

The Project was designed specifically with the needs of small independent Scottish publishers in mind. However, from the outset, it was viewed as a potential model for supporting other creative industries in Scotland - a sector which (including publishing) a recent and major study* has highlighted as a significant and growing net contributor to Scotland’s economy, and employment. [*Economic Contribution Study - economic assessment of the arts and creative industries in Scotland | DC Research, Cogent si and pirmi limited | May 2012]. We consider the model’s potential for transferability at a later point in this chapter.

...'change is now the status quo'

The Project took place during a period of continuing change within the global publishing industry and in parallel, accelerating commercial and economic uncertainties affecting institutions, organisations, the business community in general and individual citizens.

The implications for publishing and for small, independent Scottish publishers in particular, were discussed during the course of the Project. Ideas about how to address opportunities and cope with threats were shared during the Project’s workshops and also, privately, during individual sessions on their own premises, between publishers and their advisors.

Unquestionably, the seven publishers are operating in a dynamic environment. Evidence that each one of them is up for change lies in the simple fact that they volunteered to take part in a programme that they hoped would - strategically and/or practically - enable them to implement change, while minimising risk. Their engagement in the Project was for fundamentally positive rather than defensive reasons, and each came with an aspirational view of the future. From post-Project interviews with the seven publishers and their advisors it is clear that commitment and confidence about the future remain in place.

But, as one workshop contributor put it ‘change is now the status quo.’ The level of achievement of each publisher has to be viewed against what is essentially a ‘moving backdrop’ - both of the publishing industry and the wider economic environment - while recognising the absolute need for their ideas and plans to be sufficiently flexible to respond to opportunities and challenges that will arise along the way.

Here are three examples of areas where change in the publishing environment has accelerated over the time of the Project, and where the ability of the seven publishers to make an informed and inspired response to opportunity and challenge will determine the likelihood that, over the medium to longer term, they will achieve and sustain the objectives, and the tangible business growth outcomes that led to their involvement in the programme.

'There are two sides to every story'

The exponential growth of digital across the publishing industry, technologically, and in relation to marketing, sales and consumer habits, continues to increase and influence attitudes, behaviours and the practice of authors and 'traditional' publishers.

In addition to Amazon, Google’s Cloud and the multi-level routes offered through social media, the much heralded Waterstones / Kindle alliance (‘There are two sides to every story’) provides high street customers with immediate access (in a refurbished store environment) to ‘the best digital devices available with the expertise and passion for books from your local Waterstones.’ Nothing could be easier or faster than to ‘go into your local Waterstones bookshop for a recommendation and use the free Wi-Fi to download it there and then’....and, while there, why not purchase from ‘a unique range of accessories to enhance your Kindle experience.’

So, what might this mean for the small independent Scottish publisher...the opportunity for a new kind of relationship with the high street, or more of a (further) undermining threat?
Self-publishing: 'from ugly cousin to favourite stepson, overnight'

There is significant expansion and growth in the area of self-publishing as an increasingly powerful and influential strand of the publishing industry: attracting ever-increasing interest from authors from 'first-timers' to established authors.

Led by Amazon, this business opportunity has spawned a growing dedicated self-publishing support sector that involves 'traditional' publishers and agencies, as well as entrepreneurs - some large like Author Solutions, and many others small and yet to prove their worth. Collectively, they offer a comprehensive array of standardised and customised production services, routes to market and distribution, as well as creative and editorial support to writers - including creative writing schools. Continuing growth of the impressive range of offers in evidence in 2012 at both the London Book Fair and the Frankfurt Book Fair seems inevitable.

What might this mean for the small independent Scottish publisher? The 'new model' offers 'their' authors with new choices: the opportunity to 'going it alone' and self publish, with or without the support of one of the (small or large) service providers, or to stay with their existing publisher.

Random Penguin - 'game changer or business as usual?'

Mergers and acquisitions continue to provide pathways to rationalise a publishing business. Offering scope to cut costs and increase creative development opportunities; the means to invest in more innovative marketing...and perhaps to 'increase the leverage with Amazon?'

The October 2012 merger between two highly distinctive giants of the publishing scene, Penguin and Random House, will be observed with close interest by other publishers, and even more by authors. As will agency consolidations. Curtis Brown, a large literary London-based agency reflects: 'Agencies will also consolidate and provide a bigger platform for their clients in response to this changing scene.' Jonny Geller, an agent at Curtis Brown recently wrote: 'At Curtis Brown we have doubled in size, produced two in-house movies and set up a creative writing school.'

So what might this mean (in terms of opportunity and challenge) for small independent Scottish publishers as they observe the visions of those involved in 'giant' and smaller mergers roll out, and as other well established publishers and agents adopt a 'portfolio' strategy for their business operations - Curtis Brown and Faber being two examples? What role should collaboration play in the thinking of small independent Scottish publishers? Is there scope here for another strand of activity or service by Publishing Scotland itself?

When we reviewed applications from publishers to take part in the Project, the themes of all-company development and capacity building were prominent in their proposed business initiatives. As the programme rolled out, it became clear from work-in-progress feedback, that even more time and effort was being devoted to strategic issues - essentially, unpicking initially stated aspirations and coming to terms with what was actually needed.

What the Project also revealed - and reinforced - was the message that a publisher's prospects for achieving and sustaining planned business outcomes - while also coping with the environment of dynamic change - depends on the quality of resource they have access to: specifically, people, contacts and relationships within the business and externally.

Capacity and resource are recurrent themes in this chapter.
WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

A point on the journey

It is possible to say, with confidence, that there is strong evidence of achievement by each of the seven publishers who took part in the Project. But how much of this was due to the Project, and how much to the fact that, for all seven publishers, their participation in the Project was a point on a journey, on which most had already embarked?

None of the seven participating publishers were start-ups (and that includes Freight Books who were at an early stage, but beyond start-up); most had been trading for some years; one - Acair - had been trading for over 25 years. It is therefore important to view each publisher’s participation in the Project as an additional component of their ongoing work as individual businesses. The undoubted influence and impacts of the Project, over the six-month period, should be seen in this light.

It is also important to acknowledge the contribution that participation in the Project has made to all seven publishers, and there is ample evidence of this in the case studies. The contents of their own case study has been endorsed by each publisher as an accurate representation of their participation in the Project, and the results.

Results and evidence of change....in the publishers’ opinion

Here are summary extracts from the 7 (full) individual case studies, presented earlier.

Agnes Rennie, publisher, Acair Ltd

Our experience of the Project, which came at a very important time for our business, has been very positive and on several different levels. It helped clarify for us some things we thought we had to do – for example, re-building the web-site - but also not to do some of the things that we had previously considered a priority. For example, developing our website to act as a shop; we do expect to sell from it, but now this will not be its primary purpose. Instinctively we knew we were behind in our use of social media – but it turned out that we were not all that much out of step, compared with other publishers. It was hugely encouraging to learn from other people, and that has been another real benefit of the Project, hearing from other people who operate on a similar level. Discussion of production and print runs, for example: we had not appreciated how much of an issue this was for all of the publishers taking part in the project; we gained much reassurance from what we learned about this topic. Acair’s experience of the Project was been a revelation and provided us with much encouragement. The Board has gained a new impetus. The staff team is very positive, with a new vitality. We have all gained a different perspective.

Katy Lockwood-Holmes, manager & publisher, Floris Books

A very positive change despite the fact that our original idea to develop apps for our bestselling titles turned out not to be viable. This conclusion resulted from the very hard-nosed approach of our advisor; we realised that there was simply not a good business case and the volume of sales would not justify the investment. In some ways this was disappointing as Floris had geared up to pursue this direction. But it has been a positive outcome from a negative conclusion.
We have instead invested in digital marketing as a more efficient and effective way of marketing what we have, rather than on new products which, it became clear, would not sell. We have also invested in a new staff member, in a marketing role, influenced by a twenty minute presentation during the first workshop of the Project, which convinced me we had to staff-up our marketing capability. The ground we have made up over six months has seen a huge change and a big cultural shift at Floris Books.

**Adrian Searle,** publisher and co-owner, *Freight Books*

For us the degree of change has been massive – we have been sponge-like. Before our participation in the Project, as a start-up, it was more like downhill skiing, hurrying down the hill, wondering if we should veer off to the right or to the left. We now know so many things that we didn’t know then. With our advisor’s help we now know what the key pieces of the jigsaw are and how they fit together. We are much more confident. At a practical level, we now have a business plan. From the start we wanted to speed up our development and participation in the Project has done this, while also giving us access to a fabulous publishing brain - our advisor, Martin Redfern.

**Rebecca Bailey,** Head of Education and Outreach, RCAHMS

Taking part in the Project has made us smarter as a publisher and helped tidy-up some of the edges of the ways we do things. There have also been tangible results in terms of saving us money on print procurement and on the storage of books. RCAHMS' reasons for taking part in the Project never included the ambition to step up our volume of titles or print-runs. Our main ambition was to make better judgements, based on what we learned, in some areas where we were previously naïve. Our involvement in the Project has helped professionalize our decision-making as a publisher; made us more ‘conservative’ about our publishing decisions; provided us with a better understanding of our decisions and why we have made them; made us less prepared to be ‘gung-ho’ in our business decisions’ and helped us to lower our level of operating risk. Overall, the experience of the Project has tightened us up, sorted us out and given us the confidence to move forward in the future.

**Robert Davidson,** publisher; managing director, Sandstone Press Ltd

Our initiative for this project was the development of the whole company, to increase capacity, improve trade and public awareness of products and profile, increase sales and move the company into a position where it can employ staff on a full-time basis. Our reason for wishing to do this is to strengthen our company, make it sustainable, and to be a flagship creative industry in the Highlands. Over the period of our involvement in the Project we have increased the number of books on our publishing programme and we are making progress on sales - professionalized though our association with Faber Factory Plus.
Our professional practice has improved in the area of production as a result of our relationship with our Project advisor Ron Grosset. Our success in competitions and awards makes us more attractive to agents and authors, and the number of visits to our website has increased substantially. We have not yet acquired premises or increased our staff. More sales and confidence will be required to take these steps, which we recognise are important. Overall, we are very positive about what has been achieved.

Sara Hunt, director owner & publisher, Saraband

I am confident that we now have a very good start in how to go about working on the digital side by focusing on content. We are not afraid of technology or over-impressed by clever functionalities. The Project was very worthwhile. Mentoring by our two advisors was really valuable and targeted to our needs, in two business areas, where each took a strong interest and made incisive comments.

Keith Charters, director, Strident Publishing Ltd

A very positive result. From the short term and challenging position the business was in at the start of this Project, we continue to trade and do things more successfully. Our sales volume is up and our profit margins have improved, partly by reducing our front-end costs. The risks to the business resulting from an unsuccessful title have been reduced by printing smaller initial runs. Together, these improvements now enable us to plan to grow the business more quickly as we now have less money tied up in stock. By increasing the number of titles, and by planning our print runs more efficiently, we are reducing our exposure to risk.

At this point, at the end of our involvement in the Project, we have recovered our momentum and the business is on a much more secure platform, and it is a platform for growth. We are finding ways to progress and avoid standing still, and people are keen to see what’s coming next. We have a target for 3 years ahead. It is an ambitious target that we think is achievable.

WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED?

In this section we summarise what has been learned from the experience of the Project, overall, and in relation to the publishers and their advisors and how they worked together.

- Before the Project began, and after it was underway?
- Would we do anything differently 'next time', if the programme was to be repeated?
- Are the principles that guided the design, planning, organisation and delivery of the Project and its mix of workshops and mentoring, broadly applicable to a similar programme for larger-scale publishers?
- Is the approach transferable to other creative industries in Scotland?
- What are the implications for Publishing Scotland itself?
**Before the Project began**

Looking back over both the planning and delivery stages of the Project, and noting what we were told by the publishers, their advisors and other experts who contributed to the workshops, we think there are useful lessons to be learned from the overall experience.

1. **First establish the case for the initiative:** what is the opportunity; who would benefit from it and critically, would the publishers agree that their participation would produce an outcome of real and practical benefit to them? From the outset, the background and reasons for the Project were exhaustively researched and various approaches considered, in consultation with experts and specialist industry opinion, individual publishers, academics, representatives of trade and development bodies, and public agencies. Time was taken to be creative about the concept, gathering and sifting informed contributions, and testing the idea with the target audience - before commitment.

   Overall, careful planning, supported by informed industry opinion, and guidance from the target audience (in this instance, small, independent publishers) before finalising the offering, was critically important.

2. **Clarity of purpose:** from the outset the Project was intended to have a strong and singular business focus. Tempting though it was to include 'creative' strands in the programme (for example, during workshops - writing; working with authors; cover design, etc - all of which were considered) it was decided that an exclusive focus on the business aspects of publishing would be most relevant to small, independent publishers. And it was on this that the programme focused.

   Our conviction about the justification for this approach was regularly borne out during the course of the Project. Saraband provides one example of a view widely shared among the seven publishers.

   Sara Hunt, publisher, Saraband made the following observation on Donald Boyd (one of her two advisors) at the end of the Project.

   'As an individual, Donald is interested in cultural ideas. In his personal opinion, Saraband has a lot to offer creatively. For the purposes of the Project, however, and the aims of Saraband's business initiative, he focused his contribution on where the revenue and profit from our books and digital projects would come from. He was less interested in the subjects of literature and writing, for their own sake.'

   In turn, Donald Boyd's own observation speaks a truth (and sympathetically) that resonates beyond publishing, to the full range of Scotland's creative industries.

   'My main focus was to try to get under the skin of the creative idea to find a path that could be translated into a business model. Working with creative people, there is often a conflict between the attention devoted to creativity and to financial viability. While there may be richness in the ‘art’ their attention is not always applied to profit and the balance sheet.'

3. **Recruitment of participants:** take time to do this; be clear about what the programme is actually offering and what it plans to achieve for the participants; be honest about the level of commitment involved, and the financial investment for each publisher.

   Adrian Searle, publisher, Freight Books underlined the commitment of time as an important factor for (future) would-be participants to consider.

   'Participation required a significant commitment of time, especially for someone in my position who is at the same time running another business. The time commitment was not only due to direct participation in Project activities, such as attending workshops and the sessions with my advisor, but also the preparation time between meetings with my advisor.'
Katy Lockwood-Holmes, publisher, Floris Books agreed, and emphasised the financial investment involved.

'It is important to appreciate the actual investment that is required, in time and money to participate in a Project of this kind. We think the process and result was well worth the investment, but the cost has to be taken into account.'

Ron Grosset, advisor to Sandstone Press

'To many observers, from the very start, the concept of a small independent Scottish publisher having to part with the money (i.e. the fee of £1,500) to be able to take part in the Project was an interesting idea in itself. If you put your money on the table, then it must mean you are serious. For me, that says a lot about the commitment of the seven publishers who took part in the Project.'

4. Recruitment of advisors: we set out to recruit highly-experienced industry professionals, favouring those who would bring expertise in one or more specific fields, as well as strategic and business skills. We also looked for experts who had strong communication and interpersonal skills and who had both a personal and cultural capacity (irrespective of the industry scale of their own experience) to relate to the circumstances of the small, independent Scottish publisher.

We also had to find advisors who were prepared to contribute for a modest level of remuneration. The standard day-rate paid was about half of what our advisors could reasonably expect working in the open consultancy market. Fees offered to our workshop speakers were similarly modest; some declined a fee, accepting only travel expenses.

The Project was fortunate in attracting advisors and workshop contributors who found themselves genuinely motivated by the opportunity to take part.

Jenny Todd, advisor to Acair, and in her day job, sales and marketing director for Canongate Books, thought the Project had been...

'Extremely good and an excellent vehicle for helping to develop a small publishing business. I was quite envious myself and sorry that the Project hadn’t been around six or seven years ago when my company, Canongate, was at a different point in its growth. I personally learned a lot during the course of the Project.'

Willie Anderson, advisor to Strident Publishing, former director of the iconic Glasgow bookshop, John Smith, and a director of the Edinburgh University Press

‘“What on earth is this about?” was my initial response. But having read the detailed background information I realised that this is exactly what Publishing Scotland should be doing. It might actually help small publishing businesses. It is what trade bodies should be doing. Helping the membership in positive ways, helping the membership to grow as businesses.'

5. Matching publishers and advisors: there was no question of imposing advisors on individual publishers. Experience of successful mentoring shows that a critical success factor for a productive and sustainable relationship, is when the final choice of a mentor is made by the publisher, themselves. In practice, following a provisional matching exercise by the project management team, informal introductions were made and initial meetings arranged. Each publisher then confirmed whether or not they felt the relationship would work; where there was uncertainty, another suggestion was made, until a successful match was achieved. In a few instances the publisher already had someone in mind; if that person’s profile was satisfactory, the arrangement was confirmed.

Good relationships between publisher and advisor were absolutely critical to a positive outcome. Mutual confidence and trust was paramount.
Robert Davidson, publisher, Sandstone Press

'Ron Grosset developed a very good understanding of our business and grasped very quickly what were our real areas of need; we quickly developed a strong and supportive working advisor relationship.... Our professional practice has improved in the area of production as a result of our relationship with our advisor.'

Sara Hunt, publisher, Saraband

'Will Atkinson mainly focused on the print aspect of our business and has guided us on ways of pursuing a strategy for publishing digital and print versions of a title. From his advice we now feel more focused on when and how to time their introduction and how to cost them, all critical to getting the planning and delivery right. The accumulated experience of Faber has been shared with us in a way that has been extremely valuable.'

Adrian Searle, publisher, Freight Books, eased his way into what swiftly became a highly productive relationship.

'Before our first meeting, I was slightly circumspect as I thought the kind of advisor we most needed was someone with a senior publishing background in fiction. It was, however, clear from the background information we were given on Martin (Redfern), that he had an impressive publishing track record, with wide industry experience. Although not in the fiction field, he brought understanding, knowledge and discipline to bear on our ideas. The value of his immense experience became apparent at our first meeting and was borne out throughout the duration of the Project.'

Keith Charters, publisher, Strident Books

'The fact that Willie (Anderson) had not actually been a publisher was never an issue. What was important, and where he contributed most, was in encouraging me to think about the business.'

Agnes Rennie, publisher, Acair

'From the beginning we enjoyed a really positive relationship with Jenny Todd. She brought hard experience of the publishing industry and gave it to us, straight. The main message being: 'You can’t sell books if people don’t know about them.' A hard but obvious message which quickly turned around what we had previously thought would be the main focus of our work together.'

Katy Lockwood-Holmes, publisher, Floris Books

'Peter (Collingridge) had the type and level of experience necessary to help us, and a good publishing background. He quickly gained an appreciation of Floris’ position and what we hoped to achieve. He had the right skills and knowledge to help us.'

Rebecca Bailey, publisher, RCAHMS

As a vehicle for development, the Project provided us with a supportive environment to reflect on what we do, and to make us more confident in what we do. The overriding value of what our advisor Jim McCall provided during the project was a sympathetic and supportive environment, providing the incentive and opportunity to set aside time to focus on publishing and to think, consider and discuss issues, ideas and options

6. **Provide a clear structure for the programme**, describing and explaining the purpose of each of its main components; make it clear that, while based on this overall structure, the approach to delivery will be influenced by the individual needs of each publisher, and the requirements of their individual business initiatives. **Be absolutely clear about the focus of the programme:** in the case of the Project, this was business-led, with an approach that was participant-centred.
End of Project interviews with each publisher and their advisors justified the approach that had been taken, and sustained through the Project.

Agnes Rennie, publisher, Acair.

'It was very clear that from the start, the structure of the programme was developed around the individual publishers who were taking part. This was promised in the 'advance information' on the Project. It was a key message and was in practice highly effectively carried out, throughout the Project. We never felt at any time that there was any kind of template we were being shoehorned into.’

Rebecca Bailey, publisher, RCAHMS

'Overall, the Project offered a very high-quality and bespoke experience. It was obvious that much care and thought had been put into the design, delivery and management of the Project. Throughout, project management of the Project was exemplary.'

Keith Charters, publisher, Strident Books

'From a Strident perspective, the Project was a very good way of doing business development - a bit like a part-time MBA. It would have been good for me to have done it in the first year of my business, 5 years ago. A great idea.'

James McCall, advisor to RCAHMS thought that the Project had succeeded as a development tool for small publishers for two main reasons.

'First, because it addressed a very specific market. In this case seven small independent publishers, each of whom had representatives who were willing to contemplate change.

Second, the Project - as a programme - had a set of very clearly defined objectives, supported by a range of activities including workshops and advice provided to each publisher by a carefully selected advisor; in some instances, as with RCAHMS, offering access to another advisor when an additional area of specialist knowledge was thought to be valuable.'

Martin Redfern, advisor to Freight Books agreed.

'The model of this project was a really good idea for small companies that would not routinely pay for consultancy. A fantastic way to help smaller businesses – a good model and it worked. Better than a 'training course' approach. The tailored approach worked well – to the needs of individual companies. Struggle to think of a negative.'

Willie Anderson, advisor to Strident Books highlighted the value of the customised approach.

'The approach enabled each advisor to tailor their expertise to the needs of the business they were advising. Minimal structures suited the process; the right level of regimentation and the right level of freedom. An appropriate level of necessary bureaucracy - no more than was needed, and no less than was required. '

Donald Boyd, an advisor to Saraband, considered the project to be...

'A very appropriate vehicle, especially to support the small businesses that took part in the Project, who could easily have been quite intimidated by a traditional consulting-type of environment.'
7. **Workshops** - the series of 3 workshops were planned to play an important role. They provided a series of structured events, with high-quality publishing and business-led content, delivered by experienced professionals, and the opportunity for the seven publishers (accompanied by members of their own teams) to come together as a group, along with the advisors. 

This approach realised positive benefits, according to the publishers, and the advisors.

**Agnes Rennie**, publisher, Acair, while valuing the mentoring she received from her advisor Jenny Todd, and the team at Canongate Books, thought...

'The workshops were also valuable, but in a different way and having gaps between them meant that you had time and the opportunity to learn from the presentations and reflect on what you were actually doing back in your own backyard. As the Project progressed, the sessions of the workshops became increasingly targeted, very subject-specific and rooted in what we had to think about in an industry context. This undoubtedly resulted from building our profiles as we got to know you better, both directly and from what you learned about us from the advisors.'

**Ron Grosset**, advisor to Sandstone Press

'The key to the Project’s success was the workshop structure which enabled the advisors and the participants to come together at three key points in the six-month programme. Despite differences between the participants, they all had the same problems and solutions suggested by some advisors were inevitably appropriate for adoption by other publishers. For example, the approach to production planning offered to Sandstone, was directly applicable to at least one other publisher, and probably more. This coming together of different publishers who would not normally meet one another brings a very interesting perspective on why the Project has been valuable.'

Others found much of direct and even immediate value in the content of the workshops.

**Katy Lockwood Holmes**, publisher, Floris Books took an investment decision after a twenty minute presentation at the first workshop.

'The first workshop of the project convinced me that we had to staff up our marketing capability.' During the first workshop, Jenny Todd, sales and marketing director of Canongate Books, presented a twenty-minute case study on how Canongate had responded to the transforming impact on its businesses of the huge success of 'The Life of Pi.' Her account of Canongate’s subsequent consolidation and the decision to invest in staff and systems caused Katy Lockwood-Holmes to reflect on the implications for Floris.

As a result Floris took the decision to make a specific marketing appointment, 'a big investment decision for us.' Later discussions with advisor Peter Collingridge on digital marketing development reinforced the importance of this investment decision.

**Sara Hunt**, publisher, Saraband found the relevance of workshops’ content increased as the series progressed

'The second workshop was much more relevant to Saraband’s needs, including the very interesting session on the role of non-executive directors, which Saraband is now considering. Again, for Saraband, the third workshop was the best for our needs with Rob Nichols from Constable Robinson offering something quite different and a successful and positive model

**Adrian Searle**, publisher, Freight Books

'The workshops were valuable and, as ever, their benefits were down to the quality of the contributors and the experience they had to offer. Three workshops over the six months of the Project were about the right number. It is essential to maintain the highest possible quality of speakers. Their knowledge and influence adds great value to the experience, and credibility to the overall Project.'
Adrian Searle believes there were other valuable outcomes from Freight's participation in the Project - beyond what was gained from interaction with his advisor Martin Redfern. The support of the other six publishers taking part in the Project, and opportunity to compare and contrast experiences was viewed as a positive outcome and he thought that....’probably the majority of the seven will share this view.’

Rebecca Bailey, publisher, RCAHMS shared this view

‘The emergence of the ‘spirit of the magnificent 7’ was a notable and unexpected feature of the Project..... What emerged was a new community of knowledge rather than rivals and there was a real sense of a supportive environment across the 7 companies.’

Once the Project was underway

We think there are useful lessons to be learned from the delivery phase of the Project, in three main areas.

1. The importance of monitoring -throughout the duration of the Project. All activities (workshops and individual mentoring) were under constant review:
   - through regular contact with each publisher and, separately, their advisor
   - assessing what was being presented and how content and advice was being received and applied
   - examining evidence of any influence and impact as it emerged (or was reported by a publisher or advisor); endeavouring to differentiate between what resulted more or less directly from what the Project was providing, and results that happened to appear during the course of the Project, but which owed more to previous work by the publishers, themselves.

2. Employing the absolute minimum of 'bureaucracy' - while at the same time requesting - and receiving - full accountability from both publishers and their advisors. An intentionally relaxed but focused approach to project management was adopted and sustained over the six months: always there in the background, but never intrusive; 'listening and observing'; able to respond; offer support; readily available to give an opinion whenever one was asked for by a publisher or an advisor.

   As advisor Willie Anderson commented:
   ‘An appropriate level of necessary bureaucracy - no more than was needed, and no less than was required.’

3. Communication and interaction among advisors was another key feature of the approach. A round-table meeting held after the Project had been running for just over two months, involving all of the advisors, representatives of Creative Scotland and the Publishing Scotland project management team, gave an opportunity for an assessment of progress and the effectiveness of the methods being applied.

   It also provided a forum for sharing and discussing what the advisors (the 'front line' of the Project) felt were significant and recurring themes emerging from their work with individual publishers. The influence of that round table meeting cannot be over-stated in terms of its subsequent influence on enhancing and enriching all aspects of the Project - from the topics of the second and third workshops, and interactions between advisors and individual publishers.

Would we do anything differently, next time?

Drawing on the views of the publishers and advisors who worked with us during the Project, it is clear that the overall level of satisfaction with what was provided was high.

- Individual observations on matters such as either reducing or increasing the period of six months of the programme, or holding four rather than three workshops, reflects what those making these suggestions admitted were simply that: individual views.
A more fundamental question was raised by several advisors: would the programme, as offered, be suitable for the 'next level up' of publishers: in terms of scale: number of employees, turnover, etc. The general consensus was probably 'yes': in terms of how the Project was planned, managed and delivered. If anything, larger publishers would require an even more bespoke service than was offered during the Project.

There is no immediate intention to repeat the Project for the same target group (small, independent Scottish publishers) in the near future, and no decisions have been taken on remodelling or adapting the approach for a different audience: for example, larger scale publishers. For the moment, Publishing Scotland's board and management will continue to monitor opportunities to develop companies using different methods.

TRANSFERABILITY TO OTHER CREATIVE INDUSTRIES?

There is no reason why a business-led development programme, based on a similar model of approach and culture to that of the Project, would not be applicable to other creative industries in Scotland.

Direct employment in the arts and creative industries in Scotland is estimated at 84,400, and with Gross Value Added (ie the amount individual businesses contribute to the economy, based on the value of their income, less the cost of the goods and services they use to produce what they 'make.') in the region of £3.2 billion. This is 'serious' creative business. [Source: Economic Contribution Study: an approach to the Economic Assessment of Arts and Creative Industries in Scotland - Final report, May 2012 - DC Research, Cogents and pirnie limited - commissioned by Creative Scotland].

Creative industries are as susceptible to economic pressures and uncertainties as any other type of business enterprise. The guiding principles behind the Project provide a sound - and now tested - approach to supporting leaders of creative businesses - irrespective of their specific field. The experience of the Project suggests that there are certain personal and professional characteristics found among participants that seem more likely to succeed.

Based on what we have observed, these are:

- **clarity of purpose** - knowing why they want to take part in a programme / experience of this type and what, specifically, they hope to achieve.

- **awareness of their own distinctiveness and strengths** - knowing what these are and being confident about them.

- **a genuine willingness to change, and being prepared to learn** - and having the level of commitment to go through what could turn out to be a challenging process, and sustaining the commitment.

- **being a good listener** - prepared to set aside time, including outwith the immediate scope of project activities, to reflect and act on what has been heard and learned.

- **naturally collaborative** - those who are 'natural' collaborators tend to do better in the medium to long term, than those why try to do everything themselves.
IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLISHING SCOTLAND?

Marion Sinclair, chief executive, Publishing Scotland

The close connection we have had with the seven companies throughout the duration of the Project has been invaluable in providing us, as the body charged with developing the book publishing sector in Scotland, with much food for thought. From the initial scoping out of the Project with the steering group, when we discussed the differing needs and business issues that might be presented by the companies, to the closing workshops and reflections in the case studies and video diaries, we have been given an instructive, up-to-date and clear set of lessons in how best to develop small publishing companies.

We have been struck (and we are constantly reminded of this in our day-to-day work at Publishing Scotland) by how much small companies achieve with very little resource and personnel. The quality of content and production values is increasing, and publishers are generally tackling the brave new world of digital publishing – what can hamper a lot of efforts is that less emphasis can be placed on the business aspects and it’s been useful to see that a project such as this can intervene effectively and steer creative companies very gently towards thinking of cutting costs, collaborating, forming partnerships, making more of what they have, planning for the future, and adopting a more systematic approach towards list-building.

The lessons learned are discussed and summed up by the participants and the advisors elsewhere in this report but several strands have emerged for us:

- The one-to-one mentoring has been invaluable, so this is an aspect we need to concentrate on for the future
- The one-day workshops which draw on expertise outside the industry as well as inside can be real catalysts for change
- The basics need to be attended to – not going back to first principles of why the companies exist and why they publish but a more fundamental look at whether companies are doing all they can to reduce costs and outsource tasks
- That learning from other publishers can often be the most powerful aspect of such schemes
- That we need to focus more of our efforts on fostering and encouraging business and finance skills

Finally, the work done by David Pirnie as facilitator, consultant, planner and guide throughout the whole process was invaluable and confirmed for us that a project of this nature needs an experienced ‘team-leader’. Where there are hopes and expectations involved, as well as investors and publishers placing their funds and trust in a scheme, it is vital that the planning and monitoring are detailed and methodical – both aspects, fortunately, in which David excels.
ANNEX

THE PROJECT - case studies | 7 videos
THE PROJECT - the application form
THE PROJECT - workshop programmes
THE PROJECT - the launch document | June 2011
case studies | 7 videos
CASE STUDIES | 7 videos

Introduction
Towards the end of THE PROJECT, as part of the process of preparing case studies on each of the 7 publishers, video recorded interviews were held with representatives of each publisher, and separately, with their advisors. Interviews and filming were carried out by David Pirnie and the final versions of the 7 films were produced by David Pirnie and Charlie Rose.

Each interview explores the views of the publisher on four topics; their advisor (and in one instance two advisors) also comment on the same or related topics.

- experience of the Project as an approach to supporting the development of a small independent publisher
- distinctiveness as a publisher
- what the advisor contributed during the course of the Project
- looking ahead - their view of their publishing business's medium term prospects

Content
Running times vary, but all 7 films follow the same structure:

Opening:
- Opening - a 10 second silent animated title sequence (the same for all 7 film)
- Introduction to the Project - a 2 minute narrated introduction to the Project and the 7 publishers; this concludes by highlighting the name of the featured publisher on the film

Followed by:
- Introduction to the featured publisher, their business and publications
- An outline of the business initiative they planned to pursue during the Project
- A personal introduction to the publisher and to their advisor

Followed by:
- Sequence of interviews on the 4 headline topics

Films and running times

- **Acair Ltd** - Stornoway, Isle of Lewis - fiction and non-fiction in Gaelic and English; history, environment and children's books in Gaelic. Film features Agnes Rennie, publisher and Jenny Todd, advisor - sales and marketing director of Canongate Books. Running time: 9 mins 54 secs.


- **The Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS)** - Edinburgh - mass-market art, architecture and photography (illustrated) and academic / research. Featuring Rebecca Bailey, publisher, Jamie Crawford, publications manager, and James McCall, advisor - principal consultant in international publishing, Edinburgh Napier University. Running time: 9 mins 17 secs.

• **Saraband - Glasgow** - illustrated non-fiction. Featuring Sara Hunt, publisher and advisors Will Atkinson, sales and marketing director, Faber Books; and Donald Boyd, head of media sector, Campbell Dallas. Running time: 15 mins 19 secs.

• **Strident Publishing Ltd** - East Kilbride - fiction for ages 7-12, tees, young adults and adults. Featuring Keith Charters, publisher and Willie Anderson, advisor, Crossburn Consultancy. Running time: 7 mins 56 secs.
THE PROJECT

the application form
APPLICATION

INTRODUCTION

Firstly, thank you for showing interest in the possibility of your involvement in THE PROJECT. We intend THE PROJECT to be a highly personalised programme, with activities designed around the needs, interests and ambitions of the final group of 12 - 15 publishing companies that will take part. For this reason it is really important that, in completing your application, you share with us, as much relevant information as you possibly can on the following topics:

1. About your business
2. About what your company hopes to achieve through involvement in THE PROJECT - specifically:
   - what is the business initiative (ie project) you want to pursue, and what are your main objectives in doing so?
   - what will be the main measures of success (in terms of a tangible, business-led, growth outcome for your company, if your initiative is successful?)

• About your company’s capacity to deliver the initiative, in relation to its present resources: people: numbers, roles, skills and experience; market awareness; access to sufficient funds to invest in the development and implementation of the initiative.

Please read the document that accompanies this Application: THE PROJECT - BACKGROUND AND OUTLINE PROGRAMME. This describes the aim of this initiative and a summary of the programme of activities that participants will undertake over a six months period.

COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

The Application has been prepared as a WORD document and is therefore easy to complete on your computer. Simply type your responses directly into this document. We recommend that you retain an electronic or printed copy of your response for your own future reference.

e-mail your application to David Pirnie - pirnie.d@btinternet.com by 30 June, 2011.

Copying to:

• marion.sinclair@publishingscotland.org
• joan@publishingscotland.org
ABOUT YOUR CONTACT DETAILS

Please provide us with the following contact details.

Business name

Business Address – including postcode

**Telephone numbers:**

- Landline
- Mobile

**Website**

**Main contact for this Application**

Name:

Job Title

Email address

Telephone numbers (if different to the above)
ABOUT THE BIG PICTURE

A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Please provide a brief description of your publishing company (200 words, maximum)

Please provide a brief description of the project idea you hope to develop through your participation in the in-company development programme; please include reference to the objectives behind your choice of topic and the benefits resulting from successful completion. (200 words, maximum)

Are there any capacity issues that your participation in the programme would help to solve? (200 words, maximum)

TOPIC 1

ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

Please tell us about your business.

- Business name
- Year established
- Legal status (ownership)
- Main location
- Ownership
- Type of books published
- Number of employees and their main roles in the business
- Organisational structure - if you have one
- Turnover (last financial year)
- Main strengths of the business
- Areas where development and capacity building is most needed
TOPIC 2

ABOUT WHAT YOUR COMPANY HOPES TO ACHIEVE

IN THIS SECTION......

We would like to learn about your proposed project....and especially.... what your company hopes to achieve as a result of involvement in THE PROJECT:

- What is the business initiative (ie project) you want to pursue, and what are your main objectives in doing so?
- Why is this initiative important for your company to pursue?
- What would be the main measures of success (in terms of tangible, business-led growth outcomes) for your company if you achieved these objectives?
- Are there any conditions / factors that could limit your ability to follow your project through?
- Has work on the initiative already started - and if so, at what stage is it at now?
- Are you likely to start / or continue with this initiative if your application is unsuccessful?

TOPIC 3

ABOUT YOUR COMPANY'S CAPACITY TO DELIVER THE INITIATIVE

As things stand at present, how confident are you that your company has the capacity to plan and deliver this initiative - for example, in terms of:

- people (their experience, knowledge and skills
- time (in addition to 'the day job')
- market awareness
- access to funds to invest in the initiative
- are there any 'succession' issues that might influence your company's choices and decisions?
ABOUT YOUR QUESTIONS

1. Do you have any questions about THE PROJECT, its programme, organisation, timing etc... or any other relevant matter?

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS APPLICATION

Please email to:

e-mail your application to David Pirnie - pirnie.d@btinternet.com by 30 June, 2011.

Copying to:

- marion.sinclair@publishingscotland.org
- joan@publishingscotland.org
THE PROJECT

the workshops  |  programmes
29 September 2011
26 January 2012
25 April 2012
A warm Welcome to the workshop!

About the In Company Development Programme

This 6-month programme has been created specifically for Scottish publishers. It is a personalised programme, custom-designed in collaboration with each participating company to help them identify, assess, develop and implement a self-initiated business-led project. The programme began in late August 2011 with the recruitment of 7 Scottish publishers who applied to take part.

The role of expert advisor is of critical importance to the success of the In Company Development Programme. Following a detailed discussion on their interests, aspirations and capacities, each publisher is now being 'matched-up' with an expert advisor who will work with the publisher to review their business-initiative and help develop a plan to realise it; this may involve a variety of inputs - according to each publisher’s individual needs - and may include advice and guidance on strategic and business matters as well as publishing-specific and technical matters. The progress against plan of each publisher will be monitored over the 6-months of the programme and a collaborative evaluation made of what has been achieved by the end of February 2012.

About this workshop

This workshop is the first of 3 for the In Company Development Programme and today's programme has been planned with a focus on the business dimension of publishing and the themes of research (understanding and interpretation) change and investment. The overall focus and these themes represent (in different ways) aspects of the interests of each of the 7 Scottish publishing companies who are taking part. We are fortunate to have speakers who are sound, seasoned and successful practitioners, primarily in the publishing industry, and in finance. They will share information, ideas, principles and practice and lessons drawn from hard experience - some more and some less successful; the case studies are based on 'real life' examples and the people presenting them are the people who dealt with them at the time. The final session - Current State - Future Prospects - Burning Issues - provides you with the opportunity to raise issues and ask questions prompted by the activities of the workshop.

Your contribution today

Those joining us today include representatives of the 7 publishers, guest speakers, some of our expert advisers and invited guests from the university sector, and representatives from national bodies with a policy and practical interest in the success of Scotland’s creative industries. A mix of knowledge and expertise that we hope will provide a stimulating, informed and informative forum - and an enjoyable one. We are delighted you can join us for this workshop.

Caroline Gorham
Chair
Publishing Scotland

Marion Sinclair
Chief Executive
Publishing Scotland

David Pirnie
Programme Manager
In Company Development Programme
09.30 – 10.00
Arrival, registration, refreshments and informal networking

10.00 – 10.15

WELCOME

Introductions - Purpose - Main Themes - Workshop Programme

Caroline Gorham, Chair, Publishing Scotland; Production Director, Canongate Books
Marion Sinclair, Chief Executive, Publishing Scotland
David Pirnie, Programme Manager, In Company Development Programme

10.15 - 12.00

RESEARCH WITHIN THE BOOK TRADE

Reeta Windsor, Business Development Manager UK, BookScan, Nielsen

Part 1: Understanding the Role of Research

This session will lay the foundations of understanding the Role of Research at the different stages of the publishing process and how research can help with decision making. We will outline what types of research are available and where their strengths lie. We will look at how to draw up good research questions and how to identify what type of research is relevant to answer these and where to go to get answers. We will look at some worked examples within the Publishing Process.

11.00 - 11.15

Break: refreshments

Part 2: Interpreting Research – Understanding the current state of the book market and how to spot future trends

Here we will focus in and use Research to understand the current state of book trade in the Scotland, the UK as a whole and internationally using Nielsen data. We will look at an ‘overview’ and then ask some specific questions such as what are growth areas, can we tell what is actually happening within digital and are there opportunities within global markets?
Post-workshop exercise (Optional)

There will be an optional exercise for publisher participants to take away at the end of the workshop. This will invite participants to interpret a piece of current research and answer some specific questions from it. On completion, this can be sent back to Reeta Windsor for feedback.

12.00 - 13.00

CHANGE

Change is the only constant

Martin Redfern - publishing consultant

A brief introduction. Change is the only constant. What are the key changes impacting on small publishers? How do we take advantage of change? And how can change be used to beat competitors?

CASE STUDY 1

Canongate - Life After Pi

Jenny Todd - Sales and Marketing Director, Canongate Books

Jenny joined Canongate in 2004, two years after Life of Pi famously won the Man Booker prize and put the small publisher on the map. She will talk about the company’s evolution since then; the investment decisions that have been made and why, growing pains as the company moves from small to medium-sized, internal and external considerations and managing change within the team. She will reflect on what has worked and what hasn’t and share some of the lessons learnt.

CASE STUDY 2

Hodder Education: the push to digital

Vivian Marr - Oxford University Press

In early 2010, the Consumer Learning division of Hodder Education found itself in an interesting situation. A new management team was in place, the year-long relaunch of its best-known and longest-serving brand was just hitting the shops, and the company was under increasing threat from new, fast-growing competition from markets that had barely existed even a few years before. The push to digital was on. In this session, Vivian will cover the challenges the new team faced, the different digital routes they explored, and the success (or otherwise) of the decisions they took.

OPEN FORUM - Q&A

Open discussion and the opportunity to comment and question Jenny Todd and Vivian Marr.

13.00 - 13.30

Lunch - and informal networking
Investment Appraisal

**Donald Boyd** - Head of the Media Sector, Campbell Dallas

We all make investment decisions each day although we may not feel like Warren Buffet. Many of these decisions are not necessarily financial but can be about time, effort and emotional intelligence.

In this session, Donald will show how simple investment appraisal techniques (many of which publishers may already use, but don’t know it) can be applied. Some may take the form of equity investment, debt investment or time, effort and emotion. Deciding which road to go down, and at what period in a business’s life, can result in consequences that may have a major impact for the future. Donald will give examples of where investments have gone well and where they have gone not so well for owner managed businesses. He will introduce the concept of Risk/Reward and return on investment at a level that is relevant to a private business - rather than irrelevant concepts from a Corporate Finance degree in Investment Analysis and Portfolio Techniques.

**CASE STUDY**

**Hodder: the push to digital - the investment strategy**

**Vivian Marr** - Oxford University Press

Hodder’s push to digital (covered in the morning, during the Change session of the programme) was characterized by the need to move quickly, while still maintaining a very active print publishing programme and with little extra in-house resource. Continuing the narrative from the Change Session, Vivian will explain how Hodder researched and planned its investment strategy, and built digital into all investment decisions.

**OPEN FORUM - Q&A**

Open discussion and the opportunity to comment and question Donald Boyd and Vivian Marr.

14.30 - 15.10
CURRENT STATE - FUTURE PROSPECTS - BURNING ISSUES

Publishing operates in a challenging business and economic environment. This session provides the opportunity for a wide ranging round-table discussion involving everyone attending the workshop: representatives of participating publishers, expert advisers, guest speakers and other guests.

The debate will pick up and explore issues raised by (a) speakers (and others) during the course of the workshop programme, and (b) a selection of questions submitted in advance by companies, contributors and guests participating in the In Company Development Programme.

The opportunity for an interesting, robust, informed and informative debate.

15.10 - 15.15

Reflections and closing remarks

What have we done and what have we achieved, today?

**Caroline Gorham**, Chair, Publishing Scotland; Production Director, Canongate Books
**Marion Sinclair**, Chief Executive, Publishing Scotland

15.15

End of the workshop

Refreshments will be available
## PUBLISHERS

*In alphabetical order*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acair</td>
<td>Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floris Books</td>
<td>Design and production control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally Polson</td>
<td>Senior Commissioning Editor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helena Waldron</td>
<td>Production Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrian Searle</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Bailey</td>
<td>Head of Education and Outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Crawford</td>
<td>Communications Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Davidson</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moira Forsyth</td>
<td>Director; commissioning editor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara Hunt</td>
<td>Publisher and Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirsty Grace</td>
<td>Editorial and Marketing Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith Charteris</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison Stroak</td>
<td>Editor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandstone Press Ltd</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Saraband</td>
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<td>Strident Publishing</td>
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## SPEAKERS

*In order of appearance in programme*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caroline Gorham</td>
<td>Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marion Sinclair</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Pirnie</td>
<td>Programme Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reeta Windsor</td>
<td>Business Development Manager UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Redfern</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny Todd</td>
<td>Sales and Marketing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivian Marr</td>
<td>Head of Language Acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Boyd</td>
<td>Partner and Head of Media Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin McCall</td>
<td>Head of Digital Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Miller</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Redfern</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny Todd</td>
<td>Sales and Marketing Director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## EXPERT ADVISERS

*In attendance at the workshop*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Anderson</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin McCall</td>
<td>Head of Digital Services CPI Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Miller</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Redfern</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny Todd</td>
<td>Sales and Marketing Director CPI Books</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## INVITED GUESTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative Scotland</td>
<td>Dr Gavin Wallace</td>
<td>Portfolio Manager, Literature, Publishing and Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helena Ward</td>
<td>Portfolio Manager, Creative Industries and Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aly Barr</td>
<td>Development Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napier University</td>
<td>Professor Alistair McCleery</td>
<td>Director of Research and Knowledge Transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Government</td>
<td>Clare Hollowell</td>
<td>Policy Officer, Broadcasting and Creative Industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skillset</td>
<td>Suzanne Kavanagh</td>
<td>Partnership Manager</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ends**
A warm Welcome to the workshop!

About the In Company Development Programme

This 6-month programme has been created specifically for Scottish publishers. It is a personalised programme, custom-designed in collaboration with each participating company to help them identify, assess, develop and implement a self-initiated business-led project. The programme began in late August 2011 with the recruitment of 7 Scottish publishers who applied to take part.

About today's workshop

This is the programme for the second in the series of workshops which form part of Publishing Scotland’s In-Company Development Programme.

Aimed at the smaller independent publisher, today's programme has a strong business focus, that recognizes the challenging commercial environment facing all in the publishing industry: equally testing for the small and medium business, as well as the largest of the conglomerates.

Ideas for the content of the programme for today's workshop arose out of a meeting held last November, of the team of independent experts who are individually advising publishers who are participating in the six-month programme. At that meeting we discussed issues that frequently arose during sessions with the businesses they were advising. The final programme reflects the team’s shared conclusions about what would be of most use - strategically and also practically - to the smaller independent publisher as we enter 2012... which everyone agrees will be a 'testing' year.

For this workshop, the contributors are not only publishing experts in their own right, but most are also acting as advisers to one of the 7 companies taking part in the In Company programme.

- The programme begins with a sharp look at squaring up to the anticipated challenges of 2012 and will offer a tried, tested and practical 'tool' for managing business risk [Marion Sinclair and Martin McCall, head of digital content, CPI].
- The book chain comprises a series of relationships which are crucial to every publishing outcome - never more important than now with the ever more complex relationships, choices and challenges facing the small publisher in 2012.[James McCall, publishing consultant]
- Marketing is a strong theme throughout the programme and the next session addresses putting the customer at the heart of the business - including structured guidance on practical, efficient and effective ways of segmenting and targeting customer groups.[Martin Redfern, publishing consultant]
- E-books and the digitisation of content have created new opportunities for publishers and pose difficulties for their traditional route to the reader - their customer: how to address this challenge [William Anderson, publishing consultant].
- There are - as Stanley Unwin, of George Allen and Sons once wrote - far too many worthless books published and insufficient sales; this session presents a practical model to help determine a print run, with the aim of reducing idle inventory and reduce stock risk. [Ron Grosset, managing director, Waverley Books]
Is it sensible, or even feasible, for a small, or even very small independent publisher to consider recruiting a non-executive director....and what might they contribute, adding value, insights and contacts, and editorially? [Marion Sinclair and Philip Walters, formerly a senior publisher and now a non-executive director of several successful publishing businesses]

What are the top three or four 'big issues' facing the publishing industry in 2012, and what can the small independent publisher do about it? Perspectives from two industry leaders. [Will Atkinson, sales and marketing director, Faber, and Jenny Todd, head of sales and marketing, Canongate Books]

Also an invitation to everyone attending - participants and guest speakers: The one that got away - 'The book I wish I'd published, and why... and why I didn't' - a fast round-table sharing of experiences. Each participating publisher - including publisher-speakers -is invited to share a brief anecdote with the entire group............

Each session includes a presentation of about 15 minutes duration followed by an open forum and Q&A with the speaker. All speakers have asked us to invite you to come well prepared with your questions and we all look forward to lively and informed discussions.

This delegate pack includes the programme, profiles of contributing speakers and the 7 companies participating in the In-company Development Programme. Copies (where relevant) of speakers' notes, PowerPoints and other supporting materials are also included.

Those joining us today represent a potent mix of knowledge and expertise that we hope will provide a stimulating, informed and informative forum - and an enjoyable one.

We are delighted you can join us for this workshop.

Caroline Gorham
Chair
Publishing Scotland

Marion Sinclair
Chief Executive
Publishing Scotland

David Pirnie
Programme Manager
In Company Development Programme
PROGRAMME

09.30
Arrival registration & informal networking

10.00
Welcome and introduction

Caroline Gorham, chair, Publishing Scotland; production director, Canongate Books

Work is manic as we face the credit crunch, changing market and general return season head on...but this workshop provides an opportunity to pause and think as we all move into 2012, which everyone anticipates will be a challenging year....

Overview of the programme

David Pirnie, programme manager, the In Company Development Project

10.10
Squaring up to 2012: shifting focus and managing risk

Shifting focus
....and alternatives to 'going it alone'

Marion Sinclair, chief executive, Publishing Scotland

To have a realistic prospect of sustaining a stable and growing publishing business in 2012 requires publishers make a necessary shift in what some have regarded as their 'traditional' interest and pre-occupation with the product, to a sharp, evidence-based focus on the market. Alternatives to 'going it alone' should be considered - what opportunities are there for team working and new alliances? This session will explore these issues and suggest where Publishing Scotland might focus its future support for publishers.

Managing Business Risk

Martin McCall, head of digital content, CPI

The purpose of this session is to provide an overview of how our company, CPI has adapted and changed over the past few years in response to a changing and progressively challenging environment. In this session we will explain the approach we have taken to understand and address the structural changes that, along with everyone else, we are facing in the Publishing space and beyond. CPI must ensure that it continues to be profitable and to minimise risks to our own business as well as our customers' businesses. We will share and explain the 3 key points we use daily within our business to help us take the 'right' decisions: [1] There is no decision without analysis; [2] Objective / Strategy / Outcome / Lessons; [3] Measure everything.

☐ Open Forum discussion and Q&A
Exploring the book chain

James McCall, publishing consultant

One way of analysing the publishing process is to see it as a continuous chain, with many different links, all of which must be related – or linked – so as to ensure a successful outcome to the publishing project. The factors to be considered when analysing the book chain can therefore be viewed as links in the chain between various players: author and editor, commissioning editor and copy editor/freelance, editor and designer, editor and marketing, marketing and ‘the market,’ design and production, production and distribution.

This is another way of saying that publishing must be seen as a holistic process. Taking the analogy of the chain allows us to analyse in detail the relationships which are crucial to every successful publishing outcome, to test the chain’s strength and to make sure there are no weak links. Never more important than now with the ever more complex relationships, choices and challenges facing the small independent publisher in 2012.

☐ Open Forum discussion and Q&A

Put the customer at the heart of your business

Martin Redfern, publishing consultant

It is imperative that every publishing business - however small or 'early stage' - segments its customer base in order to have a clear basis for taking the decision to publish. In this session we will explore and unpick the crucially important role the customer plays for every small and medium sized publisher. We will illustrate and explain how the market must be a key driver in all decisions taken by a publisher.

By referring to actual case studies, this session will provide structured guidance on practical, efficient and effective ways of segmenting and targeting customer groups.

☐ Open Forum discussion and Q&A
11.45

Who is the retailer? Who is the customer?

William Anderson, publishing consultant

E-books and the digitisation of content have created new opportunities for publishers and pose difficulties for their traditional route to the reader - their customer. The e-book knows few boundaries as far as a market for sales is concerned. This presents publishers with the challenge of maximising the new existing potential and being in a position to target their titles to a wider customer base. Scotland should not be the limit of any publishers' market expectations, so to exploit this opportunity publishers have to learn to be retailers. To do that they have to learn how to think like consumers. Amazon, Google and Apple are the latest global players in the selling of books - so use them and learn from them to your benefit. Your customer is not the book trade, it is the reader. Get to know them and listen to what they want.

☐ Open Forum discussion and Q&A

12.15

The Over-Production of Books

a model to reduce idle inventory and reduce stock risk

Ron Grosset, managing director, Waverley Books

Around the time that World War was declared in 1914, Sir Stanley Unwin purchased a controlling interest in George Allen & Sons, and a great publishing house was born. In his book The Truth About Publishing, first published in 1926, Stanley Unwin discusses many aspects of publishing, including the subject The Over-Production Of Books and reflects upon a remarkably similar publishing world to that which we find ourselves immersed in today. The same uncertainty – the same arguments about over production - self-publishing as an alternative for frustrated authors. Unwin declared that there are far too many worthless books published and the real problem is under-consumption or to be more precise – insufficient sales.

So, nearly 100 years on from Unwin’s strategic move which saw the house go on to publish Bertrand Russell, Thor Heyerdal, Roald Dahl, JRR Tolkien and many others, we are having exactly the same debates, albeit with the addition of e-book opportunities which have added a new dimension to our daily decision making processes.

This session will offer a practical model which can be applied by publishers of the traditional printed paper book where there is indecision or uncertainty, for whatever reason, about determining a print run. Publishing is like going to the races – this model allows each-way bets, and removes the temptation to over-produce black & white fiction and non-fiction, whilst conserving cash and eliminating idle inventory and storage charges for ever.

☐ Open Forum discussion and Q&A
12.50

**Lunch**

13.30

**The one that got away.....!**

*The book I wish I'd published, and why...and why I didn't...*

A fast round-table sharing of experiences. Each participating publisher - including publisher-speakers - is invited to share a brief anecdote with the entire group............

13.50

**Adding value, insights and contacts**

*the role of a good non-executive director*

**David Pirnie, Marion Sinclair** and **Philip Walters**, non-executive director

- Is it sensible - or even feasible - for a small (or even very small) independent publishing business to consider recruiting a non-executive director?... and what might they contribute beyond predictable 'generic' fields of knowledge and expertise? □ How might they contribute editorially - a key area of decision making for a publisher, even if it does not have its own editorial board? □ What lessons can be drawn from extensive practical experience as a non-executive director of businesses with an annual turnover < £1m, about how to get the best value from a non-executive director?

- Open Forum discussion and Q&A

14.30

**Positioning and industry infrastructure**

*... the big issues*

**Will Atkinson**, sales and marketing director, Faber, and **Jenny Todd**, sales and marketing director, Canongate Books

In this session we will discuss the big issues facing independent publishers in 2012 and what they are doing about them. Topics covered will include the move to digital, the new face of retail, the impact of the new landscape on their heartland publishing and the changing role of the publisher. We will share our experiences from the perspectives of our individual businesses and as close Independent Alliance partners. There will be an emphasis on Q&A so bring along plenty of questions.

- Open Forum discussion and Q&A
Closing Forum

What we have covered and achieved today... and any other issues?

15.30

End of the workshop

Informal formal networking - concluding at 16.00

Acknowledgements

Publishing Scotland gratefully acknowledges the financial support for the 6-months In Company Development Programme provided by the main sponsor, Creative Scotland, and also CPI.

Publishing Scotland also acknowledges the generous in-kind support of companies that have agreed to their senior staff members taking time out from their 'day jobs' to prepare and deliver contributions to the workshop programme: Faber and Canongate Books. We are also grateful for the 'backroom' support of Nielsen in providing information in support of some aspects of programme content.

The sustained support and commitment of the Project’s team of expert advisers, most of whom have contributed to this workshop as speakers, has been invaluable.
**DELEGATES**

### PUBLISHERS
*In alphabetical order*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Manager</th>
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<tr>
<td>Acair</td>
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<td>Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland</td>
<td>James Crawford</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communications Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandstone Press Ltd</td>
<td>Robert Davidson</td>
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<td>Managing Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moira Forsyth</td>
<td>Director; commissioning editor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saraband</td>
<td>Sara Hunt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publisher and Managing Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kirsty Grace</td>
<td>Digital Projects &amp; Marketing Assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Craig Hillsley</td>
<td>Editor</td>
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<td>Strident Publishing</td>
<td>Keith Charteris</td>
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### SPEAKERS
*In order of appearance in programme*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Philip Walters</td>
<td>Publishing Consultant</td>
<td>Faber</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will Atkinson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Helena Ward</td>
<td>Portfolio Manager, Creative Industries and Skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Aly Barr</td>
<td>Development Officer</td>
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*Ends*
A warm **Welcome** to the workshop!

*About the In Company Development Programme*

This 6-month programme has been created specifically for Scottish publishers. It is a personalised programme, custom-designed in collaboration with each participating company to help them identify, assess, develop and implement a self-initiated business-led project. The programme began in late August 2011 with the recruitment of 7 Scottish publishers who applied to take part.

*About today's workshop*

This is the third and final workshop in the series of three. It takes place towards the end of The Project. Most of the planned one-to-one sessions between participating publishers and their advisors have been completed. The process of preparing case studies is underway, reviewing the progress of each publisher against their original business objectives for participating in The Project.

The workshop takes place only a week after the end of the London Book Fair during which most of the publishers involved with The Project had a presence on the Publishing Scotland group stand. We hope opportunities will arise during the course of the workshop (informally as well as during working sessions) for discussion of impressions, trends and the apparent health of the publishing sector.

At this workshop there are 3 headline themes that will be covered by a hugely experienced and very practical group of invited speakers, and once again with a **strong business focus**. Firstly, **Extending your digital reach** will explore 4 strands of this key field in current development: using social media to engage with audiences; approaches to online marketing and enriching the content of marketing campaigns; online publishing and profitably taking content and intellectual property online; and addressing the challenge of channelling content - with insights into the genesis and experience of Canongate TV.

The second main theme invites us to ask **Are we making the most of the media**, and specifically the continuing relevance of print media and public relations? And how does it look from the side of the books editor who is daily / weekly faced with the output of press and PR people, and the promotional efforts of publishers and authors...on what basis do they select what to feature and what to review?

All small businesses - and none of the 7 publishers taking part in the project have yet passed the £1 million turnover mark - that are planning for growth recognize the need for investment, at some point. **Building your business...but where will the money come from?** is our third theme, and provides the opportunity for one of the UK’s major banks to share its thoughts on funding options.

A major session of the workshop offers the opportunity for each one of the 7 publishers taking part in The Project to make a short presentation to the workshop on **What we do best** - highlighting what they each think is most distinctive about what they do, and what they feel most proud of. They are also invited to share what they feel they have most gained from involvement in The Project.
The final session - a Question Time - provides the opportunity to ask questions and pick the brains of the advisors, who have played a key role in the support of publishers participating in the project.

Another 'packed' programme, but as before, sharply focused on the business of publishing with guest contributors who, collectively, have exceptional and successful practical experience in their individual areas of expertise.

We have 'capacity' attendance at this workshop which will be held in the presentation suite of Publishing Scotland’s 'new home' at Scott House, South St Andrew Street, Edinburgh.

We are delighted you can join us for this third and final workshop of The Project.

Caroline Gorham  Marion Sinclair  David Pirnie  
Chair  Chief Executive  Programme Manager  
Publishing Scotland  Publishing Scotland  In Company Development Programme
PROGRAMME

09.30
Arrival registration & informal networking

10.00

Welcome and introductions

Caroline Gorham, chair, Publishing Scotland; production director, Canongate Books

Marion Sinclair, chief executive, Publishing Scotland

Overview of the programme

David Pirnie, programme manager, the In Company Development Project

10.10

Extending your digital reach

In this session......

Presentations, with Q&A and an Open Forum discussion

10.10 - 10.25

Using social media to engage and retain your audience

Sara Hunt, Publisher, Saraband

Whether for the largest publishing groups or the smallest 'indies', the message has now become clear that marketing can no longer be confined to the trade: we must also market to our readers directly, through social media. But social networking doesn't work if the content is constantly about selling - pushy social media content turns readers off and drivers followers away. This session will look at some ideas for developing a social media strategy for a small publisher.

10.25 - 10.50

Digital - issues, themes and approaches

Maurice Smith, owner-manager, The Value Innovators (TVI)

An illustrated presentation on approaches to online marketing, viral marketing and applications including book trailers, podcast interviews, building databases of interested and potential customers; approaches to publishing on-line extracts and promotional videos; how to plan a content-led marketing campaign.
Online Publishing
Rob Nichols, Marketing and Digital Director, Constable & Robinson

While the print book market for non-fiction and reference shrunk by 8.6% in 2010, according to a Mintel report in February 2011, largely as a result of free online content, the online advertising market grew by 12.8%. The challenges of this 'substitution' present publishers with as much of an opportunity as a threat. So how can publishers profitably take their content and intellectual property online?

Canongate TV: the challenge of channelling content
Cate Cannon: Head of Marketing and Digital content, Canongate Books

An insight into how and why the Canongate website Canongate.TV was created. This presentation will look at the aims and objectives of the site within Canongate’s overall company marketing strategy, the practical realisation of the site and resource required, it’s successes and pitfalls, and where Canongate hopes to take it in the future.

Break: refreshments & informal networking

Are you making the most of the media.....?
... perspectives on press & PR and by a books editor

In this session

Are you making the most of the media?
Carlos Alba, Carlos Alba Media

This presentation will cover the continuing relevance of print media and the role of public relations. It will offer guidance on how to promote and achieve the best coverage, including writing and distributing press releases, deciding which publications, platforms and journalists to target and how to deal effectively with questions from the media.
12.20 - 12.40

A Books Editor's perspective
David Robinson, Books Editor, The Scotsman and Scotland on Sunday

This presentation will provide insights into the roles of books editors and reviewers. It will explore the issues and criteria they employ when selecting which authors, books and publishers to review from the substantial volume of material (or all types) which lands on a books editor's desk.

12.40 - 12.50

OPEN FORUM

12.50 - 13.10

BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS

.....but where will the money come from...?

Andrew Clark Hutchison, Relationship Director, Lloyds Bank

Publishers, in common with all small businesses that are planning for growth, recognize the need for investment at some point in the process. Whilst banks are looking to assist and are certainly lending to small businesses, with the financial crisis and the current uncertain economic environment, raising bank funding has become increasingly challenging. Owing to this, how businesses go about planning for growth has become vital and they should consider all the funding options available.

In this session.....

Andrew will provide a personal view on banks' appetite for funding small businesses, some of the hurdles involved in this processes, as well as some thoughts on how businesses should approach planning for growth.

13.10 - 13.15

OPEN FORUM

13.15 - 13.45

Lunch : and informal networking
13.45 - 14.45

WHAT WE DO BEST......

.........in our business....

In this session......

Each of the publishers participating in the Project has the opportunity to make a short presentation (5 minutes each) highlighting what they feel is most distinctive about what they do, and the product/s they feel most proud of.

In addition, each publisher is invited to share what they feel that have gained most from their involvement in the project, and how they think this will help the consolidation / future development / growth of their business.

Presentations, in alphabetical order:

Acair - Agnes Rennie
Floris - Katy Lockwood-Holmes
Freight - Adrian Searle
Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments in Scotland - Rebecca Bailey
Sandstone - Robert Davidson / Iain Gordon
Saraband* - Sara Hunt
Strident - Keith Charters

* Saraband, having made a presentation in the morning session, will limit its remarks to a comment on its involvement in The Project.

14.45 - 15.20

QUESTION TIME.....

...what I would like to know / have your advice on.......

In this session......

During the course of the Project, each publisher has had access to an individual advisor to help talk through issues, ideas and problems, help work out ways of addressing current and future challenges and options, and to provide a sounding board for ideas.

As a whole, the team of advisors represents a significant resource of knowledge and expertise. In this final session of the workshop everyone has the opportunity to ask questions and 'pick the brains' of the advisers who will be present as a panel.

An 'open house' surgery.....so come prepared with your questions.
15.20

Closing remarks.....
..towards the end of The Project

A sharing of impressions at the end of this workshop...and as The Project moves towards its closing stage (preparation of Case Studies).

Including contributions by:

Publishing Scotland: Caroline Gorham and Marion Sinclair

Funders: Creative Scotland: Dr Gavin Wallace / Helena Ward; CPI: Martin McCall

15.30

End of the workshop
### DELEGATES

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<td>The Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sara Hunt</td>
<td>Publisher</td>
<td>Saraband</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maurice Smith</td>
<td>Owner manager</td>
<td>The Value Innovators (TVI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob Nichols</td>
<td>Marketing &amp; Digital Director</td>
<td>Constable &amp; Robinson Ltd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cate Cannon</td>
<td>Head of Marketing &amp; Digital Content</td>
<td>Canongate Books</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carlos Alba</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Carlos Alba Media</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Robinson</td>
<td>Books Editor</td>
<td>The Scotsman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Clark-Hutchison</td>
<td>Relationship Director</td>
<td>Lloyds Bank</td>
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#### ADVISERS (Attending)
*In alphabetical order*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>William Anderson</td>
<td>Publishing Consultant</td>
<td>Crossburn Consultancy</td>
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<td>James McCall</td>
<td>Publishing Consultant</td>
<td>Napier University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin McCall</td>
<td>Head of Digital Content</td>
<td>CPI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mike Miller</td>
<td>Non-executive director</td>
<td>Booksource</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr Gavin Wallace</td>
<td>Portfolio Manager, Literature, Publishing and Language</td>
<td>Creative Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helena Ward</td>
<td>Portfolio Manager, Creative Industries and Skills</td>
<td>Creative Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aly Barr</td>
<td>Development Officer</td>
<td>Creative Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Claire Squires</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Stirling Centre for International Publishing &amp; Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frances Sessford</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>Stirling Centre for International Publishing &amp; Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alasdair Smith</td>
<td>Scotland Director</td>
<td>Skillset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzanne Kavanagh</td>
<td>Partnership Manager</td>
<td>Skillset</td>
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THE PROJECT

AN INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT THE AMBITION, CAPACITY AND PERFORMANCE OF PUBLISHERS IN SCOTLAND, AND THEIR CAREER PROFESSIONALS

CONTEXT

THE PROJECT is a 6-month in-company development support programme created specifically for publishers in Scotland. Through a personalised programme, custom-designed in collaboration with each participating company, the process will help companies to identify, assess, develop and implement a self-initiated business-led project.

THE PROJECT is hosted and managed by Publishing Scotland (formerly the Scottish Publishers Association) the lead body for the publishing sector in Scotland, providing a range of services including training, information provision and book fair representation. It has a cultural role as well as helping to promote and develop a key sector of Scotland’s cultural industries, and its contribution to Scotland’s economic growth.

THE PROJECT is supervised by a Partner Steering Group of publishing industry representatives, higher and further education partners, Skillset Scotland and other network partners.

WHY IS THIS PROGRAMME NEEDED NOW?

In an increasingly competitive global market, Scotland’s publishing industry needs to focus its efforts on strategies to help lay the foundation for future success. This means:

- being thoughtful and innovative about product and market opportunities - at home and internationally - and developing imaginative and competitive responses.
- ensuring that companies have the right mix of capacities and skills required to plan, create and deliver their initiatives.
- strengthening leadership and management and fostering the confidence to survive and operate successfully within an increasingly digital creative environment.

From our own work, and our industry contacts - in Scotland and elsewhere - we understand the nature and scale of the challenge and opportunity faced by publishers. Participation in THE PROJECT gives Scottish publishers an opportunity to review their position, test their ideas, prepare and implement a development plan, with clear business-led and growth ambitions.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN TAKING PART?

On the next page we describe the main features of the programme, its 5 stages and what they will cover, and how the programme will be delivered. On the last page of this document we present:

- an indicative timetable covering the application and selection process, and each of the main stages between September 2011 (start-up) and completion in February, 2012.
- A summary of the application process; a separate Application Guide accompanies this document.
- An overview of fees and costs associated with participation in the programme.

The closing date for receipt of applications (by email) is Thursday 30 June, 2011.
THE PROJECT
IN-COMPANY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

Participation in the in-company development programme will be focused on helping each company to achieve **positive and tangible business growth outcomes**. ASPIRE | INNOVATE | INVEST | GROW

### MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

- A personalised programme, based on a collaborative assessment of the specific interests and needs of each member company.
- Conducted at a pace, in a direction and with content relevant to each company.
- Driven by companies individual needs and not simply to ‘fit’ into the timescale of THE PROJECT; some projects may be completed within the timescale of THE PROJECT; others may represent a stage in a longer term project.
- All of the companies will come together at 3 workshops during the programme: at the start; midway and at the end of the 6-months period. Each workshop will be built around a theme; these will be finalised once the interests of the final selection of publishing companies who will take part on the programme are known; themes associated with internationalisation and digital are likely to be included in the final mix of topics.
- All companies will agree to their progress being monitored and to a case study being prepared on the process and outcome – but without prejudice to commercial confidentiality. A selection of case study summaries will be presented to the Publishing Scotland conference in February 2012

### FIVE MAIN STAGES

The programme is divided into 5 stages. In outline, these will cover the following.

**Stage 1**
- Review and profiling the current position of the company.
- An assessment of the proposed business initiative (ie the project) for each company and its fit with the company’s business strategy.

**Stage 2**
- Identifying sources of specialist advice to assist the company – where required – in pursuing the development plan, including areas of identified knowledge and skills development.
- Assistance with initial contact, briefing and brokering agreements for support by specialist advisors [individual and company] and organisations – and, where appropriate – mentors.

**Stage 3**
- On a monthly basis, contact with each company to monitor progress, discuss new and emerging needs and opportunities, and how these could be met.

**Stage 4**
- An interim assessment of progress will be undertaken with each company, individually.

**Stage 5**
- A final assessment of progress and achievement, to date, on each company’s project will be held during the last month of the programme: progress toward outcomes and lessons learned.
- Each company will pursue its own project and these will be at different stages of development by the end of the 6-months programme. Some will require a much longer timeline before completion. The ‘final assessment’ will therefore focus on **overall** progress by the end of the 6-months period.

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**About the IN-COMPANY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

The complex, fast-moving and changing world of publishing presents challenge and opportunity for Scotland’s publishing industry: consumer purchasing habits; a complex retailing environment including online sales; the role of the supermarkets and discounting; rapidly developing technologies for print and digital applications; a growing market for e-books; the development of products for a widening range of mobile devices.

All of these factors, and more, invite reflection by publishers, and pose questions about their present position, products and markets, and where opportunities lie for future growth: in product, production method and market. How realistic are these future aspirations and initiatives? Against what information and benchmarks have they been tested? How robust is the business strategy? And at a practical level, are the existing skills, knowledge and experience of the business’s leadership and management sufficient to plan, follow-through and deliver it?

Participation as a member company in the in-company development programme will provide each company with assistance at the review stage followed by support in identifying and brokering specialist inputs, monitoring progress and providing further support where required.

Participation in the in-company development programme is focused on achieving **tangible business growth outcomes** for each company.
About the TIMETABLE

The in-company development programme is planned to run over a 6 - months period, from September 2011 through to February 2012.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION

June to July

The application process is launched in the first week of June. Thursday 30 June is the closing date for receipt of applications - by email.

Final selection of participating companies will be made in the week commencing 25 July.

COMPANY AND PROJECT PROFILES

Late July - August

Using submitted applications as a starting point, we will work with each participating company to prepare a company profile and proposed project description.

THE PROGRAMME

September - February 2012

Following a process to match each company with an expert adviser (engaged by THE PROJECT, through Publishing Scotland) the 5 main stages of the programme will commence in September and run for six months, through to the end of February, 2012.

The programme will start with a workshop in early September, introducing companies to one another, and each to its expert adviser. The subsequent passage and timing of the programme through its 5 main stages will be agreed between each company and its individual adviser.

About APPLYING TO TAKE PART

An application guide accompanies these background notes. We ask you to provide us with information....

- About your business.
- About what you hope to achieve through involvement in the activities of this programme.
- About your company’s capacity to deliver its business initiative.

The closing date for submission of proposals is Thursday 30 June. Final selections will be made in w/c 25 July.

About FEES AND COSTS

THE PROJECT is funded through investment by Publishing Scotland and Creative Scotland, leveraging private sector sponsorship, and investment by other government agencies.

It is however necessary for fees to be charged meet the balance of costs.

FEES

Each company selected to participate in the programme will be asked to pay a fee of £1,500.

This will be made in 3 instalments of £500, the first payable in July, on confirmation of a place in the programme.

The fee represents a contribution towards the costs of Stage 1: the expert adviser, appointed through the programme, who will provide a total of 4 days input.

The fee will also cover attendance at 3 workshops during the course of the programme: at the start, at a point approximately mid-way to two thirds through the programme, and at the end of the programme.

Each company will be responsible for meeting its own travel and any associated accommodation costs to attend these workshops.

COSTS

Selected companies will be responsible for meeting their own costs associated with the programme, and the implementation of actions contained in the development plans produced during Stage 1.

This will include, during Stage 2, their employment of additional experts for further specialist inputs that may be required to support their development plan.

Involvement in THE PROJECT represents a calculated investment decision by companies that decide to take part. This re-enforces the business-led approach that will be maintained throughout the programme, and the business-growth outcome that it aims to achieve for each participating company.