

COMMENT & DEBATE

Learning Through Publishing: Norvik Press and Student Publishing at UCL

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When Norvik Press Ltd moved to UCL it became clear from the start that the press was not only going to be physically located within the department, but also play a pivotal role in finding new ways of engaging the students with Scandinavian publishing. Its presence within one of only two remaining departments of Scandinavian Studies in the UK opened the possibility of collaborations not only with colleagues but also with students. But the possibility of collaborating with staff and students also went beyond language specialism: thanks to its range of activities Norvik could potentially collaborate with several other UCL departments, of which Information Studies is a good example.

Although the press was originally established in the 1980s – long before concepts such as ‘impact’, ‘enterprise’ and ‘public engagement’ became crucial within the UK research environment – Norvik’s activities seemed to fit perfectly with UCL’s strategy to support and encourage a more active and two-way collaboration between enterprise and the teaching and research environment.

In this short piece we wish to present some of the activities that created and consolidated a constructive collaboration between UCL and Norvik Press, and present some reflections on how small publishing companies specialising in the humanities can feed into the curricular activities of a university. Having presented some of the activities in which Norvik has been involved as a main collaborator

in order to support the new generation of translators and designers, we will then report on a number of 'spin-offs', namely initiatives that were inspired by the presence of the press at UCL. How can small publishing companies like Norvik Press contribute to the teaching/learning environment?

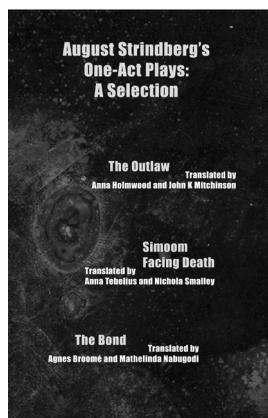
The Making of Norvik Press Ltd

Norvik is a small publishing company that publishes translations of Nordic classics into English and critical literature in English about various aspects of Nordic literature and culture. Norvik also publishes two journals that come out twice a year, *Scandinavica*, an *International Journal of Scandinavian Studies* and *Swedish Book Review*. The press started off at the University of East Anglia (UEA), not as a company but as a series of activities around publishing that arose as part of the research carried out within but also outside the Dept of Scandinavian Studies at UEA. The very first publishing project was the journal *Scandinavica*, started in 1962, which was followed by the very first critical book in 1985 and the very first translation in 1986. It was only in 2003 that Norvik incorporated under its umbrella of activities the journal *Swedish Book Review*, a publication that had been independently designed and printed since 1979. The move to UCL in 2010 coincided with a great number of technological changes. In the course of this transition phase Norvik started to explore new forms of publishing. The press opted for Print on Demand and is in the process of creating its first podcast publication and will soon release its first e-book.

This process of innovation and change became somewhat easier thanks to the support of UCL Advances, which supported the press in exploring the mutual benefits arising from the collaboration between universities and small publishing companies specialising in the humanities. Norvik Press was able to pass on knowledge acquired from its range of activities thanks to a workshop called *Book Camp*. This two-day workshop had the aim of providing a hands-on introduction to desktop publishing for academic and support staff, students, social enterprises, and anyone else who wished to develop their skills in producing professional-looking publications on a budget.

The workshop constituted a combination of theory and practice of publishing where Norvik Press real-life material was used as a case study to discuss marketing, layout, new technologies, etc. The workshop was only the beginning of a number of publishing initiatives that lead to new Norvik publications led by students, but also to a new post designed to support publishing activities and a magazine project.

Lagerlöf in English and Strindberg's One-Act Plays: Engaging the Students with New English Translations of Swedish Classics



Book Camp emphasised how Norvik Press could pass on a number of transferable skills that were clearly in demand among staff and students. A natural next step was therefore to find ways in which students could be involved in the process of creating books and/or magazines.

The first project was linked to Norvik's commitment to fostering the next generation of translators from Swedish into English. This project was led by UCL Impact PhD student, Agnes Broomé. As part of the celebrations for the Strindberg 2012 centenary, Norvik Press

decided to publish a selection of Strindberg's one-act plays in new English translations: *Båndet* (The Bond), *Den fredlöse* (The Outlaw), *Innenför döden* (Facing Death) and *Samum* (Simoom). These plays were selected and translated by a team of early-career translators (Agnes Broomé, Anna Holmwood, John K Mitchinson, Mathelinda Nabugodi, Anna Tebelius and Nichola Smalley), mentored by experienced translators. This innovative approach to developing and sustaining Swedish-English translation grew out of the UCL Impact PhD Studentship scheme, with the support of the Barbro Osher Foundation, the Swedish Academy and Mr Stefan Olsson. Thanks to this project the PhD students involved were able to follow and take part in every step of the book production. They were able to make decisions and take responsibility for their choices while being guided and supervised by

in-house expertise.

Although the Strindberg project was one of Norvik's most comprehensive collaborations with staff and students, this hasn't been the only one. The Lagerlöf series has so far been connected to projects aiming at fostering the new generation of designers and artists. The book covers for the series were the result of a competition run in collaboration with Beckmans designhögskola in Stockholm and initiated thanks to the initiative of the then cultural attaché Carl Otto Werkelid at the Embassy of Sweden in London. The school was given the task of creating a range of modern covers for the first three books in the series (*Lord Arne's Silver*, *The Phantom Carriage* and *The Löwensköld Ring*). The task was made into a short course for interested students: they had to learn about Selma Lagerlöf and read the three books, while at the same time familiarising themselves with the basics of how to create and design a book cover. The result of this competition was more than 10 sets of covers which were brought to London and judged by a team consisting of representatives from the Embassy, the translators and Norvik Press representatives. All the covers were later exhibited at Kurturhuset in Stockholm.

A second competition was run in 2012 for the illustrations of Norvik's new translation of *Nils Holgersson's Wonderful Journey through Sweden*. Like with the book covers, Norvik Press wanted to involve emerging professionals in the process of creating a new look for this Swedish classic. For this reason, the press organised a new competition: aspiring illustrators had to create two sample illustrations based on a sample translation of the first three chapters of the first volume of Nils Holgersson. To ensure that the illustrations would be ready in time for the publication, a careful schedule was drawn up, and the illustrators had to agree to follow it in order to enter the competition. Once again, like with the covers, the aim of the competition was to give students the opportunity to get a taste of a real publishing project resulting in a real publication.

Framed Horizons: Engaging Students with Nordic Cinema

In 2012 Norvik Press published its first book of student writing where



Framed Horizons:
Student Writing on Nordic Cinema

eds. Marita Fraser, Melissa Powell, Rose-Anne Ross,
Anna V. Sørensen, C. Claire Thomson



undergraduate and graduate students were involved in the editing and peer-reviewing process. The book is called *Framed Horizons: Student Writing on Nordic Cinema* and is an anthology of essays written by BA, MA and PhD students of Nordic Cinema at UCL. Seventeen students were involved in this publication: fifteen authors, three of whom were also editors. Students were assisted by Dr Claire Thomson, Senior Lecturer in Scandinavian Film, and Marita Fraser, Production Assistant

for Norvik Press.

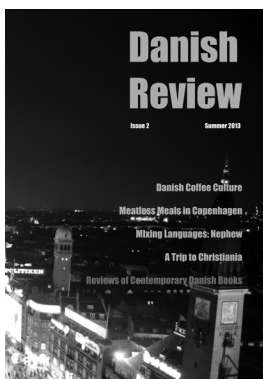
Framed Horizons was initiated as a test case to explore whether it might be possible to offer students a publishing project as an optional commitment that would provide them with real world experience in publishing. Dr Claire Thomson felt it was a shame that excellent essays were stored in a filing cabinet after being written and marked, and was convinced that there was some value to them being given another life as a published anthology. These essays were not only informative and presented very interesting case studies in the field of Film Studies, they also constituted excellent examples of how to write a good essay with a well-written film analysis. This project offered all the student authors the opportunity to review and reflect on their writing, and gave the editors an experience in peer reviewing as well as the other aspects of a publishing project.

The anthology was produced using Booktype, an online open-source publishing software developed by Sourcefabric, which allows all contributors to follow the progress of the publication in real time. Using this software, authors can edit their own piece as well as peer review and suggest changes to other articles. As a collaborative publishing tool, Booktype proved ideal for this project and other publishing activities developed within the university environment. While contributors and editors were editing the content, the design and layout of the book were developed in parallel by Marita Fraser. Booktype creates, in fact, an html container for the publication, which, at the end of the project, can be output in different formats (such as

print pdf and e-book).

Framed Horizons was launched at the Frankfurt Book Fair as part of the Digital Innovation Sparks Stage events. Three students involved in the project were able to take part in the Q&A session presenting the publication to the public. While the book was the tangible outcome produced by this project, this was accompanied by a number of learning outcomes that gave the students an entirely new set of skills and experiences that could not have been developed in the traditional classroom environment. Not only were they given the possibility to review and improve upon their own writing through reflection, peer reviewing and close as well as remote collaboration with other fellow students. They also gained an insight into the publishing process, leaving the university with published writing, experience in editing a publication and a physical tangible outcome, a book.

Danish Review: Engaging Students with Danish Culture



In 2011 Jesper Hansen, Teaching Fellow in Danish, found a new way to create a specialised ‘space’ where students taking courses in Danish language could engage with different aspects of Danish culture. Most of the students at UCL spend only limited time on Danish topics outside the language classes. *Danish Review*, a magazine with contributions by undergraduate and graduate students, provided a much needed Danish ‘space’ and aimed to create a balance between the general (Scandinavian Studies and SELCS, School of European Languages and Cultures) and the specific (Danish language and culture).

As with *Framed Horizons* and all other publishing projects mentioned so far, students were able to gain an insight into the publishing processes behind the creation of a magazine. Besides having to write original pieces that could be read by the general public, students were involved in the reviewing and feedback processes and were encouraged

to find suitable illustrations for their pieces – all highly transferable skills which would enhance the students' CVs, giving them a set of experiences that they would not necessarily obtain by successfully fulfilling the requirements of a BA or MA course.

The idea of achieving all these outcomes through the magazine format came from Norvik Press's presence and support within the Department of Scandinavian Studies. Initially the journal *Swedish Book Review* was a great inspiration, and, to a great extent, its structure and layout has influenced *Danish Review*. *Swedish Book Review*, edited by Dr Sarah Death, publishes excerpt translations of new Swedish fiction as well as reviews of new titles. This niche was, however, already occupied by *Danish Literary Magazine*, published by the Danish Arts Council and targeted to publishers, writers and translators. While *Swedish Book Review* thus influenced the structure adopted by *Danish Review*, the content and style of the magazine was shaped by the earlier UCL publication *Sophia* – the UCL magazine for academic journalism, initiated by Ed Long in 2008 (see <http://www.sophiamagazine.co.uk/>) – and by the widespread public engagement culture in the Department of Scandinavian Studies. With the massive success enjoyed by events organised under the auspices of the Nordic Noir Book Club – led by Dr Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen, Senior Lecturer in Scandinavian Literature at the Department of Scandinavian Studies, UCL – it had become clear that the interest in the Nordic countries shared by a large number of members of the general public went beyond crime fiction. *Danish Review* therefore came to occupy a space in-between journalism and academic writing, allowing for both serious academic articles (see for instance 'Danish New Simplicity' in *Danish Review* 2012) and more journalistic pieces (see for example 'Coffee Culture' in *Danish Review* 2013).

With the 2013 issue, Marita Fraser introduced the use of Booktype, this time not as a publishing tool, but as a platform where all students involved in the magazine could work on all contributions at the same time. Booktype allowed several students to comment on each other's work while being supervised by a member of staff. One important effect of this was a shift in the way students experienced the creation of the magazine: the process became just as important as the end

result, as students could follow the progress of the publication live.

To sum up, the magazine format offers an array of possibilities and develops a number of technical skills, but most of all it gives students the possibility of reflecting on the implications of writing not for a grade but to inform and entertain a real audience.

The Future of Student Publishing...

The projects described in this piece are just some of the new possibilities for future innovation and collaboration with colleagues and students that Norvik Press has been exploring in the past few years. Norvik Press is today part of a university and, while it certainly needs to continue its publishing activities, it has also developed an important pedagogical role: it can provide students with skills and experiences that are related to their studies but that they would not have been able to gain had they not been involved in collaborations run by a real independent publisher.

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