

## *Flourishing, not perishing*

A FRIEND WHO TEACHES engineering at one of the country's prominent post-secondary schools recently paid me a visit. Talk, as it always does when friends start catching up, turned to work. My work being publishing, and his work governed by the adage "publish or perish" (a not-so-ancient phrase, which first appeared in 1932), we can always find common ground.

With respect to the pressure digital media exert on the world of print publishing, he noted that Canada's federal grant agencies—the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council—adopted an open-access policy this past spring that requires grant recipients to make federally funded research they complete publicly available through an online repository or open-access journal.

While this promises to help libraries trim subscription expenses, my friend noted that the cost of making results available through these channels must now be factored into research budgets. This will cost researchers thousands of dollars each year, biting into research budgets even as it frees access to information (at least in digital form).

(It's worth noting that a handful of contributors to past issues of *Amphora* have requested digital copies of their efforts for deposit in repositories universities have set up to make the work of faculty more readily available.)

Where does this leave far costlier means of dissemination such as printed matter?

Sarah Sutherland pondered this question in *Amphora* 165, describing the phenomenon of phantom research libraries known only by word of mouth, books sitting untended in the dark recesses of government buildings and—in the worst case—simply ditched in dumpsters.

Print, it would seem, is becoming the Rodney Dangerfield of letters: it gets no respect.

Yet this year marks the 50th anniversary of the Alcuin Society, and its persistence suggests that reports of the death of print have been widely exaggerated. Its annual Awards for Excellence in Book Design in Canada, and the care taken in laying out little magazines (such as this one), testify to the ongoing pride many still have in presenting the printed word. While the distribution of literature undergoes a sea change, these paper vessels of culture continue to fare forth thanks to solid design and ragtag crews of ideas seeking welcoming ports of call.

This issue includes articles that look at how printers such as Andrew Steeves of Nova Scotia's Gaspereau Press continue to rediscover and work with age-old practices, keeping the inheritance of past generations as fresh and as critically important as the navigator's knowledge of the stars and skill with the sextant. Ralph Stanton explores the rich, deep roots of print culture harboured in the museums of Brussels and the surrounding area. And John Steil recounts his discovery of chapbooks as a way to bring the book arts home in the simplest of ways, allowing him to find his own path through a cultural wilderness (to steal Gaspereau's term) that can often seem impenetrable.

And, of course, there are the usual departments, among which debuts a new column devoted to small presses penned by Toronto book collector Chester Gryski.

Throughout the year ahead, *Amphora* hopes to showcase a living tradition of book arts in Canada. There is much to celebrate, thanks largely to the imagination and innovation each new generation brings to the tradition it receives, and ultimately passes on to the next.

~ Peter Mitham, editor