
Expanding Spaces and Re-calibrating Voices in Humanities Scholarship

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Abstract

The persistent valuing of the traditional academic monograph still presents specific challenges, leading many of us to limit our "public" writing to blogging, tweeting, or conference sessions like SSAWW's. In my contribution for this roundtable, I'll describe strategies I used to create a monograph for the University of Michigan's series on "the new public scholarship"-a publishing site straddling the borderland between traditional discipline-based books and publications pitched to speak not only across disciplines but to readers such as museum workers and social organizations, civic stewards and community partners. Goals for the series include bridging between "scholars and communities by publishing writing that emerges from publicly engaged and intellectually consequential cultural work" (<https://www.press.umich.edu/browse/series/UM149>).

Here are some of the questions this endeavor led me to address in my writing:

- a) What research methods do we need to tap into to re-frame our scholarly writing for broader audiences? (In my case, for example, I shifted from research ON to research WITH community partners while taking an auto-ethnographic approach.)
- b) What very specific changes do we need to make in our writing voices and conventions? (I crossed over to a more narrative mode, incorporating a first-person voice and a learner rather than an expert stance.)
- c) What are the challenges entailed in such approaches? (In my case, these included balancing the need to maintain scholarly rigor with the effort to write with accessible organizational patterns, sentence structure and vocabulary. Other challenges involved honoring the shared ownership of the knowledge-making process in writing and revising, so that research partners' perspectives could be taken into account down to the level of word choice.)

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