

Turning Your Research into a Book

UCL Writing Lab

Festival of Early Stage Researchers

Fri, 4 February 2022, 13:30 – 15:00 GMT

Join us for this panel discussion between five researchers who have published monographs, edited collections, trade books and digital artifacts, post-PhD. They will share their experiences of the process and labour of producing a manuscript for publication, and share practical ideas, including around how to manage teaching loads while producing manuscripts; structuring your time and helpful habits; flow of work with the publisher; balancing domestic labour and family life with publishing; asking for and receiving help. The panellists can speak across a range of experiences, including traditional and non-traditional academic career paths; precarious contracts and permanent jobs; being a disabled researcher; from the perspective of sitting on a University Press committee; researching and writing as a parent.

Dr. Anouk Lang is Senior Lecturer in Digital Humanities in the Department of English Literature at the University of Edinburgh, where she teaches C20th and C21st literature. Her research interests centre on the way digital technologies can produce new insights into cultural transmission and reception. She has held grants from the AHRC, the British Academy and the Carnegie Trust. Her current project is a co-edited collection on the digital futures of graduate education in the humanities.

Dr. Alex Lee is a medieval historian who works on the intersection between popular religion and epidemic disease in late medieval Europe. She published her first monograph with Brill in 2021: *The Bianchi of 1399 in Central Italy: Making Devotion Local*. Alex has also published articles on the Bianchi and medieval religious confraternities, and has articles forthcoming on miracles, processions and teaching with Twitter. She currently teaches at UCL, King's College London and New York University London.

Dr. Morna Laing is Assistant Professor in Fashion Studies at The New School, Parsons Paris. She holds a Ph.D. from University of the Arts London, where she also lectured from 2011–2019. She is author of *Picturing the Woman-child* (Bloomsbury 2021) and co-editor of *Revisiting the Gaze: The Fashioned Body and the Politics of Looking* (Bloomsbury 2020). Her writing has appeared in peer-reviewed journals such as *Sexualities*, *Fashion Theory*, and *Critical Studies in Fashion and Beauty*. She is currently working on her second monograph, entitled *Sustainability and the Fashion Media: Spectatorship, Affect and Social Change* (Routledge, forthcoming).

Dr. Shardia Briscoe-Palmer is an Assistant Professor in Sociology at the University of Nottingham. Shardia's research specialisms intersect across the politics of gender, race, and social injustices. Shardia received her doctorate from the University of Birmingham in 2021 and Her research focus explores the politics of black masculinities whilst (de)constructing postcolonial identities. Shardia's research interests also include academic diversity and inclusivity challenges faced by minority groups within higher education. Shardia is a mother of two young boys and spends many of her days navigating the world around them, being their example for change. She can be found via Twitter @ShardiaBPalmer

Dr Susannah Gibson is a writer and historian based in Cambridge. She holds a PhD in eighteenth-century history from the University of Cambridge and her PhD thesis was later re-imagined as the critically-acclaimed book *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral?* (Oxford University Press, 2015). She is also the author of *The Spirit of Inquiry* (Oxford University Press, 2019) and her next book – a study of eighteenth-century bluestockings – will be published by John Murray in 2023. As well as writing, Gibson has worked in academia and literary festivals, and is interested in the public understanding of history.

Transcript

Kasia Bronk: Good afternoon, I hope you had a nice lunch or you are having your lunch right now. This is the final day of FESR, the Festival of Early Stage Researchers, thank you for joining us. I have to say, this has been by far the most popular session this week so it looks like everyone is very excited about publishing a book, so thank you very much, Kerry-Jo for offering to run this session for us and I'm Kasia Bronk from Organizational Development and it's our team that designed and run the festival but we couldn't have done it without the fantastic collaboration and contribution from our colleagues. So Kerry-Jo is one of our long standing friends who's running with us Writing Lab sessions 'shut up and write' sessions and various sessions really relating to writing, writing skills, writing strategies, and wellbeing in writing, all sorts of things so for this festival, we really wanted to have a really strong presence from Kerry-Jo and her lovely colleagues. And here we are. So without further ado, apologies for the broken link, we do not know what's happened, hopefully, you are still arriving and we will get that everyone who's interested. I'm handing over to Kerry-Jo and just at the end of this event, I would very much appreciate, if you could fill in the evaluation form which we will be distributing at the end just to help us plan the next session and, of course, we know that there was a there was a hiccup with the technology, so we will take that on our implement list, next time, thank you.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Hi everyone, it's lovely to see you. So, we think the process of producing a manuscript for an academic publisher can feel kind of different to writing a PhD thesis. And many of us don't have access to like a informal mentoring system for that so we've got these wonderful five panellists today - Hello everyone - and your thoughts today and your suggestions for everyone here going forward today are going to be incredibly valuable. We brought you together because there's a need among early career researchers to make a success of publishing their PhD thesis or recent research, in the context of lots of other joys and things to be proud of that characterize our lives and our careers, and also pressures, so things like precarious contracts, heavy teaching loads, kind of part time employment with small amounts or no research time, and then the demands of potentially domestic labour and family life. And so, as well as guidance based on your experience, and the nuts and bolts of the process, a sense of how to navigate this publishing your research within those parameters I've mentioned is something I think we'd already value hearing from you about. So what we want to do is not keep those contexts, excuse me, invisibilised, but articulate them and be real about them, and I think that's also why we're lucky to have all five of you today, because you have a really wide range of experiences in the Academy, and the routes you've taken, and, as we know, we don't all have the same journey, we're not all in exactly the same boat, so we can

talk about all the all the different varieties, and then but also kind of share help and see what will help each other and ask for help.

So I have some questions, everyone, for the panellists, you can put your questions in the Q&A, and then we'll have time at the end to respond to those questions. We have just, yeah, about an hour and 20 minutes or so together today. So let me do some introductions.

Hi Anouk! So, Anouk, you are Senior Lecturer in Digital Humanities at University of Edinburgh researching the way digital technologies can produce new insights into cultural transmission and reception and you're currently co-editing a collection on the digital futures of graduate education humanities.

Hi Alex! So Alex you published your first monograph last year and you're a medieval history and working on the intersection of particular religion and an epidemic disease in late medieval Europe. And you teach here at UCL, King's College London, and New York University London. Thank you for being here.

Hi Morna! So Morna you are Assistant Professor in Fashion Studies at the New School Parsons Paris and your book *Picturing the Woman Child* came out last year, and your co-edited collection *Revisiting the Gaze: The Fashioned Body and Politics of Looking* the year before and you're in the middle of another book now, *Sustainability and Fashion Media Spectatorship, Affect and Social change*, so we have lots to talk about there.

Hi Shardia! Hi. So you are Assistant Professor in Social Media at University of Nottingham. Your research is at the intersection of the politics of gender, race and social injustices, with a focus on the politics of Black masculinities and deconstructing postcolonial identities, and another of your research interests is academic diversity and inclusivity challenges faced by minority groups within higher education, so we're really keen for your insights there as well, so thank you for being here.

And finally hi Susannah! So Susannah you're a writer and historian based in Cambridge and you turned your PhD thesis on 18th century history into a critically acclaimed book *Animal Vegetable or Mineral* with OUP and in the trade book division, rather than the traditional monograph division, and I know you're interested in the public understanding of history, so this is an interesting angle to hear about as well, and your other book is *Spirit of Inquiry* and you're working on another and coming up.

So that's everyone, that's us and hi participants, hope you all have everything you need, you can turn captions on if you want. We're not going to release the recording of this event, but we will share transcript with you. And yeah you can turn the captions on at the bottom if you want. Good so yeah put your, to the audience, put your questions in the Q&A when you're ready and we'll get to those questions, maybe through the session, or at the end.

So where I wanted to start is if you could talk to us about your research, your publication, anything salient about the contexts during that period of your career that you want to tell us about. So Alex let's start with you, since yours is very recent.

Dr Alex Lee: Yes, and so, as you said, I'm a medieval historian and I work on plague and popular religion, which is, unfortunately, timely at the moment and I published my first book, I have it here, with Brill last year. Sorry I just muted, the context of this is I was writing my book, when I was on precarious teaching contracts so kind of trying to find time to write when I wasn't being paid to do any research with those teaching contracts, I was a research assistant for a bit, and doing all sorts of other things, so kind of juggling all that, while trying to find time to write the book. So that was the process for me.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Great. Thank you. And Shardia, what can you tell us about your publication your research any contexts that are salient?

Dr Shardia Briscoe-Palmer (she/her): So I'm still in the process of writing, and you know publication and so on, but in all of that, you know the context for me, is, I'm still classed as an early career researcher myself and I graduated last year, July, even though I submitted before covid. And, but also I've been kind of juggling, or part of my journey is having a disability myself, I'm absolutely fine to share that and for it to be the transcripts that I've got multiple sclerosis, I have about 16 years now, and I also recently learned in 2019 that I am also dyslexic so juggling that as well, and amongst things, and something that I think is really significant and often you know people explore and ask about my own and disability and differences, but I also have a young son who has autism, or is on the autism spectrum disorder, so his disability also you know, plays a part in my journey and adding contexts to me finding time to write, and you know, hopefully getting to the end of that publication stage.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Thank you. Susannah, how about you?

Dr Susannah Gibson: Thanks Kerry-Jo. So I did a PhD in history, 19th century history, but throughout the PhD I was never entirely sure if I wanted to follow an academic career path or not. And I expect a lot of people who signed in here today are doing PhDs and maybe will follow an academic career if you want, or many of you are still thinking about that. And I found when I was a student that everyone assumed that you would get on to follow an academic career and there wasn't much talk about other career options. So, if anyone has any questions about that, moving sideways to academia, I'm really happy to talk about that.

So I finished my PhD and I locked it in a drawer for several years and didn't think about it because I just couldn't, I'm sure a lot of you know that feeling. I took the job running a literary festival, because I knew I wanted to do something bookish or something like that, and I worked four days a week at the festival, and then, after a couple of years I finally managed to face my PhD thesis again, so I spent one day a week sometimes working on turning that into a book. And I sort of I still wanted to keep my options open, so I went with Oxford University press, they are really great publisher, but they also have a trade division. So all of their books, even the trade division are peer reviewed, so it counts as an academic book if you decide to go back to academia, but you're allowed to do fun things like use adjectives and adverbs which I really enjoyed. So it's kind of the best of both worlds, for me, so I would say if you're thinking About, whether or not you're not following more academic route or more popular or something entirely different, think about what kind of with publishers are out there and what they do and what kind of audiences they get to, and how that will work for you and how that will reflect your interests. And there are lots of interesting ways I think to go sideways from

academia so yeah like I say if anyone in the audience is thinking about that I'm really happy to talk about that.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Okay, and I definitely relate to needing a break after your PhD, I didn't read a single book, apart from one book of short stories for nine months.

Morna, how about you?

Dr Morna Laing: Yes hi everyone. So, in terms of my PhD I was working at University of the Arts London at the time, as an Associate Lecturer. And then, just after I was awarded the PhD I got an a fractional post, so it was three days a week at Chelsea College of Arts and I think that was actually at the same time I was starting this process with the book and I think, for me, something that I did is I really underestimated actually how much time I needed to turn it into kind of a kind of readable format for a different audience and different readership. And I think, for me, one of the things that I really struggled with was with kind of motivation, and so I mean we can talk more about that later, but I think it was just kind of this feeling of like you know you finish the PhD and you finish it in the form that you think makes most sense for the research. And then you kind of have to go back in again and, like unpick a lot of it, and so I think part of it is also that you know the material so intimately and that it can be difficult to kind of get a sense of what you can remove and have the whole thing still make sense, so in terms of the context, that was kind of where I was at. And you know as you kind of alluded to earlier, like the salary academic posts are kind of very loaded and administratively so I think I had kind of coordination duties, and you know, trying to squeeze it in three days was tricky, so doing the book alongside that was quite challenging but that's the kind of general context, that I was kind of doing in.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Thank you very much.

So I think what would be really useful for people to hear is, if you could describe how it was for you, the flow of work, you know, of producing this manuscript, in a way, that perhaps would help the others in the audience prepare for that process so including with any concrete examples. Shardia, where you are in the process or anything you'd, any other things you've produced before and anything else would you like to add.

Dr Shardia Briscoe-Palmer (she/her): So um I agree, first of all with the with the other panellists in regards to needing that break. And you know, ask me to make a cup of tea and I just couldn't remember what order you make that in, that was the kind of the level of exhaustion I was in at the time. And there's no set time for what break looks like, I think that's important as well, everybody's break and what you do on that break is completely different. For me in regards to the flow of not only creating the proposal in the first place but also now just working on that manuscript and I had to take my head out of being a PhD student and working in that capacity in that role, and that was my focus, to then thinking actually it's just me now, and this book, and you know the commitment here felt for me a little bit a little bit different in regards to when I was doing my thesis, alongside that I work full time as well and, as I said before you know, I've got young children, but I think I like what I have taken and still kind of do from while I did my PhD in regards to time management and timetabling, and you know it helps me in this process and also beyond, and I still stick very rigorously, and again this

is me and not everybody is able to do this, to timetabling regards to when I work on my teaching things in prep and so on, and when I do my administrative roles, and then I have carved in my week a portion of time where I will, I will focus on writing and preparing to write as well, that's another thing is, you can actually you know put aside the morning or a day and you spend most of it, preparing to write and you've got you've not written anything.

So part of that that flow, that process as well in the early stages, would be finding an appropriate support team and, and in that I mean other colleagues or others going through something similar with you, where they, for me they act as my checks and balances, I write with them, we selected a day of the week, we still have it now, which is Thursdays half nine til half twelve, where we have you know, a writing group. You know, at times, it feels really frustrating, because I feel like I want to be doing more. But I don't have any time to do any more. So again it's about you know, having those conversations with myself to be realistic. And in me being realistic with my time, also be kind. I think I'm still probably exhausted from the PhD process and kind of you know, the anxiety towards the end and the build-up so, you know I can I can speak like this now because I'm in and I've gone through a process and I'm now what I feel is in a good working flow for me. But I will be really honest at the beginning of this whole process, I was, I was a mess, an emotional mess. Nothing would have come together, I didn't really understand what I was supposed to be doing, all the different publishers seem to want something different. And so it was just it was a lot, and again from talking to others, and you know, we are also very kind in sharing our work and our proposals and so on and so forth, you know, ask and get that get that support network behind you because I've found, and things like these, these seminars series really, really useful.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Thank you so much. Really good.

Susanna, how is the process of doing the manuscripts with the publisher for you?

Dr Susannah Gibson: Yeah I think I really understand what Shardia's saying about taking a break, being kind yourself and then preparing yourself. And about preparing, I'd say two particular things, is to have some kind of a plan you know, obviously, your publisher will want some kind of structure, some kind of a plan, but even for your own sake it's worth really putting in time and effort into having a plan. And again I think this is where having a break from PhD comes in handy. Sit back from the PhD and say okay ah those chapters and those chapters and that thesis but two years on, is that still what I want to do, and not to be afraid to change things around and rip it up and say it's fine to get rid of that half chapter that I only put in to please my external examiner or whatever, so I think sitting down, being quite ruthless with yourself, planning things out, having a clear idea, which you don't have to stick to but start off with some kind of idea where things might go. For me, that was really useful to sort of have some kind of end product in mind and to be quite clear about it.

And I think, also the rewriting it can be really daunting you know you've written PhD at 80,000 words whatever you put your heart and soul into it. And then to think that you might have to get rid of a whole bunch that, rewrite it, redraft it, change it and restructure it it's really it seems like a huge amount of work. So prepare yourself for how much work and be how hard letting go of some of the old stuff can be, but also be open to how much better it might be to change things. So yeah I think I think, be prepared to jettison some things, for my book, partly

because it sort of different type of audience and wasn't going to be as academic, I think there are three chapters from my PhD which sort of blended into the final book but I rewrote a lot of those bits, there are a few chapters that were completely new research. There's one section that was in the PhD that went into the book pretty much as is and it's my least favourite part of the book, even though, it worked fine in the PhD but it just doesn't feel right for the book and I do wish, I remember at the time just thinking I don't have time to rewrite this, and not rewriting it, and I should have so, sort of think to yourself, you know after the book is published, will I feel like I've done myself justice and yes it's stressful and it's a lot of work but just sort of be realistic about what's involved, and you know you also, there are time constraints or financial constraints, there are a million different things that take up your time, so you have to factor this in but yeah I think I think having a vision of what you want, I found quite helpful and having done some things quite badly, I think you then go on to the next book and think ok It will be better next time but learn from my mistakes.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Yeah that acceptance is really part of writing isn't it. Thank you.

Morna, how would you describe this flow of work with the book and the publisher?

Dr Morna Laing: I think I agree with Susannah you know the comment at the end right, like it's not your life's work in a way so it's okay if it's not perfect, in a way, and I think, for me, like I mentioned this aspect of motivation, and I think I struggled a lot with that because I really wanted to move on to something new, I think, at the same time, and I had this kind of conflict, because I wanted to kind of disseminate my research more widely, and but at the same point I was quite ready to kind of explore, you know quite a different area, like connected to sustainability, and so I think in hindsight, and I wish that I had been okay actually with kind of letting go in a way of the new project, just for kind of a certain amount of time to leave the kind of headspace to focus in on turning the PhD into a book because afterwards I realized that it was only once it was done and dusted and published, I was actually able to kind of have the space to think about anything else, so I think if I could go back, I would have been kind of more compassionate with myself and maybe had a bit more patience and I, you know, like, hopefully life is long, so you know, maybe in the future, you can then move on to something else a bit later, but it's it's okay to kind of take your time and just do one thing well, I think. And so I think you know I would have resolved that kind of internal conflict, if I had kind of thought in that way about it.

But in terms of the flow, I think the other thing I would mention was and the kind of, for me it was really about, because I felt like I had a very long literature review and the thesis was quite front-loaded with like theory and history, and then the empirical chapters came afterwards, so a lot of the work for me of turning the PhD into manuscript was kind of taking out sections from that very long theoretical part and hoping that the book still made sense, without it, and I think because you're still in it can be difficult sometimes and to see if it still makes sense, without certain parts. So I think like, if I had factored in, like a little bit more time for myself I would have maybe found a very kind and willing colleague who could have you know read it from scratch, and you know, maybe told me because you know I think you're so close to it sometimes I mean I'm happy with the final book, but I think you know that would be my kind of advice in terms of like the flow of the process.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Thank you very much. Thank you. Anouk, what can you share with us about the process in your experience?

Dr Anouk Lang: So I'm a bit of a different situation, I think, to the other four, just being in digital humanities, where there's almost always some other artefact, like a database or network or a map, that's an important part of what I'm building alongside my argument and that will lend itself better to a digital platform. And also it's interdisciplinary work, so it has to speak in my case, to both literary scholars and computer science folks so just when I was thinking about how to answer this question about workflow, presenting, for me, presenting at conferences and seminars is really important for my process. So I like to present the work at least once to an audience, because that gives me a sense of how it lands and actually you know, when you have kind of visual artefacts that are part of your argument, I actually find the PowerPoint deck a less forbidding thing as a first draft than a blank screen. So yeah so after I've kind of given that that see-how-it-lands paper, that often gives me a good steer about what people will find interesting and almost always that's like different to what I find interesting so it was kind of learning about what the audience, what the audience doesn't understand, what they need to explain to them, and what bits need to be upfronted more. So kind of at that point, I will you know do a second draft, and the third.

And then I have, I'm lucky enough to have a trusted reader, who's another academic but someone in a different field, you can, you close enough to the humanities to understand, but far enough away that's kind of quite useful, it'd better to be clear, because if it's not, then he'll tell me. So he reads for me, I read for him and I find I just I can't send anything to anyone in my own field before my trusted reader has seen it but once he's seen it, and he tells me it's alright, I feel like yeah I can probably show it to people without embarrassing myself so yeah if you know, the participants in the audience like have someone that could be that person for you then, and you can set that up as a reciprocal arrangement too, because you learn quite a lot from being that critical friend or the editor to someone else, and that would be something I would recommend.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Yeah really good Thank you.

Alex. How was the flow work for you?

Dr Alex Lee: So I think it's quite similar to what lots of other people have already described. So I put the thesis down for about six months before I even thought about the book. Because I think you really need that space, just because you're basically going to have to cannibalize the thesis, destroy the thesis and completely tear it apart and turn it into a book. And because you spent so much time kind of creating this thesis you need to kind of be prepared to do that, and so I needed that time to kind of mentally prepare for kind of destroying something that I spent so long, creating.

I had to reframe it for different audience and reshape it a lot. So I had five chapters in the thesis but I've got eight chapters in the book, for example.

A couple of other things, so one issue for me in terms of the flow is image permissions. So this is something that I am kind of got on straight away. And so, as soon as I started talking about the show I looked into the image permissions so, because, so I work with medieval Italian stuff. So dealing with medieval Italian like archives is a bit of a challenge so even just finding an email address or something that could take a few days and could be quite convoluted process. And so, if you need images, I think that is something to think about kind of straight up and to make that part of your process, so I kind of kept a spreadsheet and kind of every eight weeks or so I'd email if I hadn't heard back. And so that was kind of baked in throughout the process.

I killed a chapter that the peer reviewers wanted back, so kind of be prepared for that kind of thing to happen as well. And I think massively overestimate how much time it's going to take you. And so I kind of had an idea and then I added several months on to that for how long I thought the publisher I was going to need. And I did need that time because it's not just writing it's kind of thinking and I had a lot more reading to do as well, and so kind of bringing in concepts that came up in the viva that I hadn't brought into the thesis that needed to be part of the book and that kind of thing so yeah I think, taking time and thinking, as well as writing.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: That's really useful, thank you, and this is useful for me to hear as well in the editing of a big project I'm doing at the moment, that you've all kind of talked about patience, which is not how I'm feeling. And I absolutely agree about this critical reader thing, I cannot do it without a critical reader, and then similar to the patience with ourselves, the managing the publisher's expectations that's really useful, I think we'll talk more later, I think the questions are interested in approaching the publisher.

I wanted to ask you how you structured your time for this project, including you know around teaching load if you had that, or any other parts of your life you're juggling. Morna, how about you?

Dr Morna Laing: And yeah So for me I kind of had a lot of I guess coordination responsibilities at the time, and so I was kind of managing the theory program for a BA textile design course and I think what really helped is if your university gives you the option of applying for early career researchers status. And because I went through that process and eventually I got some remission from my teaching load which did help a bit to some extent, but because I was coordinating theory, in a way, like, I was responsible for coordinating my own cover, so it was helpful but also kind of created a kind of administrative load that went with that so. And I think in hindsight, I would have probably maybe voiced some of that frustration more with my line manager and communicated that and I think, maybe there were ways that I could have been very supported if I had done that but I think you know when you're new in post sometimes you feel kind of, and it's kind of tricky, so I think yeah communication was important. And then I think the other thing to help me manage my time was just kind of having a document it sounds very basic I still do in life and it's just like 'Where Am I Now' it's like a word document, so that when I finished on one day doing something with the manuscript I can just note down what I had done. Because I realized, I was wasting a lot of time, because when you do it in kind of snatched moments here and there, it can be quite difficult to kind of have to have train of thought that you have when you're doing a PhD when

you might have, you know, a whole week with you know, not that many commitments, so I think I eventually learned that I needed that just to save myself the time when I went back to kind of know where I had left off in a way, so I think that really helps me kind of be more efficient in terms of my time.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: That's really practical, thank you, Morna.

Anouk.

Dr Anouk Lang: I mean this this continues on from what Shardia and the others were saying that when you're in an academic role it's just incredibly difficult to find time to write. I find, you know, you can just about manage the teaching, but the burden of admin is insane, every year there's more paperwork more hoops to jump through more reporting, and we're just expected to absorb it. And you have to be really fierce and vicious to protect your writing time and that's really hard, because you know I don't want to be that sort of scholar, I want to be generous to students, particularly post grads because you know it's the areas that you're helping them with. So I think this is something that like institutions have to take on board that you know, the burden of admin that they dump on us is stopping us from writing.

So that kind of with that infrastructural caveat in mind, I thought the best way to approach this question would be just to mention two periods in my life when I have, like circumstances have allowed me to carve out time to write. And the first time was reading up my PhD when I was in that that loop of like, I just need to read one more thing that you know I'm sure we've all been through and, you know I see kind of every dissertation and every PhD student go through. And what happened to me was I broke my leg about six months before my deadline, and it was it was horrific, and it was the best thing that could have happened to me at the time, because I was forced to sit down, put my leg up on the cushion, and write. I couldn't make it to the library, I had to write, and I found that actually I could write. I didn't have to read anymore. So it's really hard to recreate those conditions, obviously don't go to break your leg or have someone break it for you. But I mentioned it just because I think, like if you kind of recognize that I need that to be just one more thing feeling, then it's worth like trying to artificially create a similar set of constraints for yourself. So this is the kind of thing that makes writing retreats really helpful, I think. Even if, like, all you can do is book a room on campus for a few hours with one other person like, you've still carved out a space where you know, there are constraints on you to like, to write, to not waste that time reading. Obviously reading is important, but you know, at some point, you have to stop.

And the second time I've had the conditions in place to be able to carve out that time is when I had an alt ac role actually. It wasn't precarious, it was like a permanent contract in a university, but not doing a teaching role, it was brilliant. It was nine to five, paid at a lecturer's rate, access to a library, and when I got home, I had the mental space to write, and I could actually write in the hours after dinner, there were no urgent pastoral queries from students or no last-minute reference requests, no teaching prep. So if you can draw that boundary yourself into teaching post and ignore all that stuff, then I take my hat off to you because I find it like nigh on impossible. I'm extremely impressed that Shardia is able to do that. But, like the whole kind of drawing boundaries around your time like blocking off a morning blocking off

and even I think like over and over that's what you hear people in academic roles say, that's, the only thing that works.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Yes, an academic colleague and I were talking about putting it as a calendar diary entry, you know, for your writing.

Shardia, how did you structure your time, or do you structure your time?

Dr Shardia Briscoe-Palmer (she/her): So, the way I structure my time, as I said before, it's through so much experience of a really difficult time for me to being where I am now. I've been. There's been many tears and tissue rolls and so on and so forth, I just couldn't juggle it. I mentioned earlier I've got a son with autism, I also have another son, so I have a nine year old and a four year old five year old. And, and you know, first of all, before I even think about writing and I look back at my journey, I have had to learn how to write. And do my PhD and kind of you know, getting the thumbs up from academics and supervisors over the years, I you know I thought I'm a good writer and so on, and it's not, you know about the content, it's about the techniques that I've had to learn along the way, and the way I've learned this technique is attending writing retreats or writing seminars and by that I mean what does it mean to attend a writing retreat? You've got to do the preparation beforehand so you're not reading during that time. Things like I'm a perfectionist and I will spend however long trying to perfect sentence, where I just need to get whatever is in my brain on paper, and we can go back to it later, but I've had to really teach myself how to how to write in that way and that manner. I also don't have the privilege of the weekends and evenings and so you know when I finished I'm done, I don't have the weekends, I've got a very young family to have to attend to, by the time everybody's in bed, the last thing I can do is get a laptop out to start writing anything productive, and then the weekends, I feel it's not fair for my children, that's their time with mummy, and she's got the laptop on my lap, there are occasions, yes, where I do get it out, and you know get the digital gadgets out and so on, but in general that's you know that's the type of work life-balance I'm really trying to hold on to because I've been the other way where have worked, seven days a week, and living off toast, tuna pasta bake, and whatever you can grab in the cupboard, to be honest, long story short, it didn't, it wasn't a healthy situation.

And so yeah so, as I said, you know I've got my teaching timetable and I'm quite fortunate in that my institution has put all my teaching a course two days so and I asked for that and I'm happy with that and so everything associated with teaching, the admin, the office hours and so on, I keep across those two days and therefore you know, I do have a bit of time to do other things, research and administrative roles and departmental commitments, so I, you know how to also find when in the day is best for me to write – I'm early morning, that's where my brain is ticking, some people can work really well in the evening, or within the night-time and you know that that's not me. I also found out I can't spend the whole day writing. And, as in nine to five, so I'm good to do three hours snippets in the morning and I find that quite productive. And another thing and I have to use, you know who I am and my experience my subjectivity, my kids again is that you, you know you're going really, really well in your writing and in one week after week after week and producing something, and then, here comes half term or here comes the six week holidays or Christmas or nativity play or something, and it really can, you know, really put a big block in your momentum in writing

because, once you stop the theories, oh gosh I can't, especially after the six week holidays, how are you going to start again, and that's really difficult, and in the planning and I plan a lot probably bit too much, you know, I factor all that. And it seems to work at the moment, maybe because my kids are at a certain age, it seems to that, I'm thinking when they were younger, as in babies and I was thinking about starting a family. It was extremely difficult, because obviously younger children, they have more needs or they want more time from you, and you know, invite me back in in 10 years time went up with teenagers, and I'll let you know what it's like on, on the other side, but yeah so that's how I found my time and my day it works now who knows, next year, it might not work and then I'll have to be readjust it again.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Really good, thank you Shardia. We talk a lot in the Writing Lab about these things of like finding your, what works for you, which times a day, you know, and planning things out, and yeah just everything you were saying, and anyone who wants to come and talk to the Writing Lab more about the types of techniques Shardia was just talking about you're very welcome to.

And Susanna did you have anything to add about how you structure your time, including with these other demands?

Dr Susannah Gibson: I have to say listening to academics talking about how they structure their time, is just it's so impressive that you both get writing done. So, like I said, my first job after it actually wasn't an academic job and I arranged it to that I worked, I did all my hours in one day a week and then I just I had one day a week to write which I think is much harder to arrange an academia, because there's so much tutorial and lecture and kinds of work. If you are able to carve out time that's a privilege and you have to protect that really if you can get that time, yeah I find that, as much as you can, but I know how hard it is in academia.

I would say, for me, as well I've found deadlines, setting my own deadlines really helps, you know, regardless, of what anyone else is saying, I'm going to try and get it back by the end of the month and I try to make myself to stick to that, it doesn't work for everyone but it does help me to have an idea of when I want things to be done.

In a similar vein for an equal sign with a broken leg, I had a very hard deadline during my first book, because I was pregnant, and I wanted the book down before the baby arrived which again I wouldn't necessarily recommend that as a tool that people should go out and get pregnant unless that's something to think of doing anyway! But having that deadline that you just cannot get around focus the mind I find or maybe, you know, maybe make you have more realistic expectations of what is possible for the book, and I think actually to being realistic about what's possible and time will also to help make your decisions easier. And for anyone that does an academic job, so impressive.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Thank you. I'm going to ask a couple of you now about, just specifically about balancing the demands of parenting and/or domestic labour with this process of publishing. Susanna, did you have anything to add on that?

Dr Susannah Gibson: Yeah well actually a lot of what Shardia said sounded really familiar, with that you know, I don't work evenings, I don't work weekends, that's all about the kids so I

just yeah, just trying to structure my week as sort of sensibly as I can to try and get things done when I can, like this is the first time in ages I haven't even have kids in the House so I'm able to do the seminar without anyone bouncing in, which is, which is quite a feat. But yeah I think everything Shardia said about small children, just sounded very familiar to me. I finished my first book, I think I think the baby was due around the same time the manuscript was do so, I called up my editor and said is it ok to submit the manuscript a little bit early and then send it back to the reviewers and send it back and hopefully I can do the edits before the baby comes, and I think she thought I was completely insane or maybe I was, but I did manage to get most of it done before the baby arrived, and then I've got a picture of myself holding the baby in one hand and indexing with the other hand, for the book index, with a baby on my lap. Luckily they're a bit older now so it's it does get easier, and I think you get, as you get more used to being parents things work themselves out, and you work out childcare, and schools, and everything else, but every new stage will have new demands on your time that you never saw coming. But I don't know if I have any, I guess you just embrace the chaos. I love writing and I love my kids and it is a bit chaotic, but it sort of all trundles along, I try not to get too stressed about it, I don't know if I have any very concrete advice.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: that's great. Thank you, thank you. Anouk, did you have anything to add on this topic?

Dr Anouk Lang: yeah so I also thought that, yes, Susannah and Shardia, what they said chimed with me as well. I mean, I think parenting while working full time as an academic and trying to write just it makes you efficient in a way that you didn't realize you were inefficient before, like you find yourself with a rare 20 minutes in the swimming lesson, you use it. I mean speaking for myself the only way, the only way I was able to carve out time for writing with small children was just to get up early and do it before the household was up. And if anyone's in the audience, who has a child that doesn't sleep you're going to just be hating me for suggesting this so I'm sorry. But once they're old enough to sleep through and, crucially, to not wake as you tiptoe past their doors on your way to your desk then yeah the early mornings are the only time.

And the other thing I'd say the best kind of general tip I could give balancing these things with the demands of parenting is simply to ensure that your co-parent is a feminist, of whatever gender so someone who understands how the mental load is more likely to fall on women. So, you know, the two of you as parents may work it out as equally as you can, but the world will make assumptions that, you know, women if you're in a straight couple, that it'll be the woman who, you know, the school calls when the kid is ill, you can even put, you know, if you're partnered with a man, you can put their phone number first and it'll be you who gets called and obviously I'm speaking to my experiences, just someone in a straight couple, people in LGBT partnerships and single parents are going to face other challenges. I mean myself and my partner we're immigrants, so we don't have the family network, I think, having a family network, I think, would be amazing.

So, but the other thing about parenting, so partnering and parenting with a feminist is that feminism I think is super practical, it gives you tools to see through nonsense like feeling guilty about using childcare. So feminism just helps you to see that for what it is, which is ideological nonsense, you never hear men talking about any guilt that they feel about having their kids in

childcare. Childcare is great, it helps kids with their social and intellectual development. Do not feel bad about using it. And don't have children with someone unless they're going to be up understanding how complex and ongoing a task it is for both of you to share the work.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Thank you Anouk.

And as we heard Shardia, what you said already, about parenting is really, really resonant - did you have anything else you could share with us?

Dr Shardia Briscoe-Palmer (she/her): Sure, even though we all have our own strategies and just way of managing through and coping, I will not lie, it is extremely difficult, it's very hard. The you know the guilt is there in regards to putting them in nursery or child care, after school club, and so on and so forth, but again, those provisions are there for a reason, and I think once you can get your head around it, get rid of the guilt, it really made such a big difference, and another thing in regards to parenting and, and this is where I say again just be kind to yourself. It's okay if you didn't write what you wanted to write that week and you know you're a few hundred words short. You still deserve and need the weekend, or some time, whatever your weekend looks like, to just to just stop, and especially if you've got children, whether they're young babies or older, you know spend. remember family's important and what we're doing is just a job. And when it comes down to it, and I think Covid, for me helped me a lot realize this, in regards to working from home and home schooling, which is a concept that only somebody who doesn't have young children came up with, that was ridiculous. But I enjoyed the time, I enjoyed spending time with my children, and you know, because they would be at school, otherwise, most of the week so, you know, remember that those times are important, I think people say all the time, especially as they're getting older, you're going to you're going to miss it when they're when they're teenagers and so on, and you know it is a, it is a job, and one thing I've had to also stop doing is comparing myself to everyone else, who's seemed similar to me and actually you don't know this story, or you don't know what happens when you leave the office. And it's also that it's quite a, it's quite a, you know, demoralizing thing to do, we all do we all, compare to one another, but it's not helpful when it comes to juggling you know your academic career, your writing, and parenthood. Somebody finished my PhD and got their book out within months, somebody finishing the within years - either way you both have a book, you both get there in the end. And you know that's how I see things now. I keep saying now because I've gone through a journey and it's okay to go through that journey.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Thank you. I think that's going to be really useful for many of the people in the audience, thank you very much. I wanted to ask you about asking for help and receiving help, so what kind of help with this process of publishing did you receive or ask for, and do you have any suggestions for things the audience members might want to seek, even if you didn't receive that kind of help yourself. Anouk, how about you?

Dr Anouk Lang: Yes, so the William Germano book, which I think it's called *From Dissertation to Book* was helpful for me, but there's two things I pulled out that were helpful.

The first one was I just I found it really helpful to talk to you know people who were ahead of me in their careers like senior will publish people just about the writing process. And so, one thing I found out by doing this with someone that I think of as like a hugely accomplished and

confidence scholar was actually just as wrecked by writing anxieties the rest of us and you know they had a tactic for getting over it, which was to tell themselves like okay just get the first draft, and it doesn't matter. And then you come back and re draft and you tell yourself, the same thing this doesn't matter I can always do another draft. For some reason that was just a really useful key for me to learn about other people, you know who produced staggeringly impressive scholarship kind of also find it hard.

And then a second piece of advice is a practical one, and that is, it can be really helpful to find a senior scholar to help you get the attention of an editor, particularly if you're working you want to get published to the university press. So you know I feel like we've most early career people have got the memo about the importance of seeking out mentors and then kind of once you are established to yourself be trying to act in that mentor relationship, when you can. So yeah to use your mentorship networks to find a respected senior scholar who you know if you need them to can write to the up editor or even the series editor to say look I think it's worth you taking a look at this proposal and you're not asking the senior person to read your whole manuscript or your proposal you're assessing them to kind of. You know, help you stand out from the crowd a bit so you know it's rubbish that the system works like this, but you can think of it as like getting around the filtering mechanisms that a busy editor who's you know being deluge by proposals and emails like they need to have some kind of filtering mechanism in place to have a preliminary indication proposals worth reading. So one of the books I published, I had a senior scholar do that, and it was just it was, like everything just went much faster when I had you know this, this kind of covering email from the senior scholar, so yeah you could you could try and try and find someone to act in that role for you, that might be helpful.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: really helpful. Thank you. Susanna how about you?

Dr Susannah Gibson: yeah I would definitely agree with Anouk about trying to build up your network of mentorship right from the start of your PhD, seek out other people who may be able to support you and guide you. I was really lucky with a lot of people who were supportive and that made a huge difference. But the other thing I wanted to say was something we haven't talked about very much, but I think is really crucial is money and finance and funding. So very few people who do a PhD go straight into a job, a permanent job. And I would say yes, even before you finish your PhD, think about how you're going to finance yourself. You can pick up bits and pieces of teaching and everything but is it actually enough to pay bills? So I took a job in a different industry which I love, but you know you might have to take different jobs, you might have to apply the various grants, if anyone is thinking of writing a non-academic book, the Society of Authors was fantastic [...] In whatever field you're in, get on all the mailing lists, make practical decisions, think about you know how long we are going to need funding for and this kind of thing is really boring but I always I just think financial planning is so important during the PhD or early career staff. So, even before you finish your PhD, so sort of think how you're going to fund this whole process, and hopefully you'll all walk straight into permanent jobs but if you don't then reach out to societies, there is support out there on a practical level, but it's not always that easy to find, and again if you have mentors ask them where, you know, if they know of anything, yes try and think about about the practical side as well as just the writing side, it's such an undertaking that can take months or years, have some kind of plan I think.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Very important point, thank you.

Alex how about you?

Dr Alex Lee: So I think a big part of asking for help is playing a lot of 'don't ask don't get'. So someone mentioned once at the end of the seminar, 'oh email me if you want me to read something'. And sort of ordinarily you'd be kind of a bit too scared to email someone really senior and be like 'I have written a thing would you please read it' but I emailed all of these people who ever offered to do anything for me. And some of them never got back to me, obviously, but some of them are really helpful and sent back kind of useful comments on my chapters and that kind of thing. So 'don't ask don't get'. And then also, I think, if you can make contact with someone who's published in your book series, I think that's very helpful, so I have what I call my fairy godfather. So, the stars aligned and we met at a conference and he published a book a few, kind of, back in the series that I published and he shared his book proposals, gave me advice on dealing with the publisher. And kind of stuff about, they don't do copy editing, so kind of just kind of nitty gritty stuff but equally kind of, here's how you negotiate, and this is what you do with maps and all of these kinds of things and he read all sorts of stuff for me and it just was very, very helpful, so I think if you can contact someone who's published in the same series as you and then I think they can provide a lot of very practical support as well.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: very smart. Thank you.

Great so building on this practical thing, I wondered if you could each, if each of you have any very practical tips habits do's and don'ts that you haven't covered already and Susanna did you have anything to add, in that way?

Dr Susannah Gibson: I bet there's a lot of good tips already. I would say, I say no to a lot of things which sounds like a really negative thing to do, but it's sometimes you just really need to protect your time and it can feel hard saying no to things and sometimes even things that you really want to do, but for me it's I think protecting my time and being aware of how limited resources are has been sort of how I've been able to write what I've written so far. So yeah don't be afraid to be a little bit selfish occasionally if that's what you need to do to get things done, but don't be completely selfish, be a nice person too!

Kerry-Jo Reilly: That sounds crucial, yeah.

And Shardia, how about you?

Dr Shardia Briscoe-Palmer (she/her): What Susannah just said about saying no was one of mine. In regards to, I've learned to say no, and sometimes I feel like I need to take the opportunities, especially when I was looking for a permanent position, I wasn't really, you know, in the position to say no to, you know, small research opps here and there. But if you're writing, and writing a book is a project in itself, then you then you need to be committed to that project as well. And then another thing that I did, and this was my supervisor gave me this advice, when I was doing my you know final editing for my thesis, and I will, have, taken it to

the book as well, is I printed the whole thing which, obviously, that is, a lot of money and quite thick. And then I sat there with scissors and I, and I put my chapters up and then I cut up my paragraphs. And then I was literally the living room floor, I was like nobody come in the living room, don't breathe, don't make the door do any wind or anything. And I was able to kind of move things around that way, realize that actually that whole section doesn't add anything, it's not needed, it's very thesis based, and it's not really for book purposes and that audience. And that's just something again that that works for me and that that was passed on from my my supervisor. And another thing I was going to say is that, when Alex was talking about, you know if you don't ask, you don't get, and sometimes you feel like you've missed those opportunities, like nobody's really said that to you. I went back to my supervisors, not in a supervisory capacity, but more, you've been, you know, we've known each other for a while now, because of our PhD relationship, are you able to give me any advice on what, you know, where I should go, what I should do, and actually we had a great conversation, and she basically told me where I should be applying, or what publishers I should be working with, and kind of let me know, I had a lot of self-doubt and low confidence to which publishers I was approaching and she gave that reassurance, actually you can go a bit higher, your work is that good, you are worth going for the university press, and not just any, but the higher ones as well, because before that conversation with her, I didn't even think, I didn't think I was good enough to approach university press so go back to the supervisors that took you on in the first place.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: perfect, thank you.

And Alex.

Dr Alex Lee: I think a couple of things. So one is, do use the book to situate yourself and so by this I mean, I did my PhD in an Italian department, but I'm a medieval historian, and so I wanted my book to be in a history kind of setting. And so you can use the book to do that, to kind of situate where you want to be as a scholar. And I think also coming back to money again so if you've got lots of images like I do, look for funding for that. And so the University of London has funding and, for example, if you did your some of your studies in the history department. And so there are funds available, if publishing is going to cost you money, so do just kind of look out for stuff like that, and again use your network, email people, to see what's available to you.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: thank you. Morna, same question to you.

Dr Morna Laing: And I would actually echo what Alex is saying around images because I think often the publisher will offer you like a black and white option and they'll, my experience was that if I wanted colour images, I needed to find the funding, and then you kind of need to factor in when the rounds of funding are available. And, and I know it was like textiles and dress and the Passold fund offer funding and for colour images within a book, but the deadline for the application I'd missed, so I think in a way, like it's just kind of maybe scoping that out and factoring that in, how much time you give yourself to prepare the manuscript. And then also like Alex, you know have some sort of a system like a spreadsheet because I think I had about 60 images and it's this thing of kind of chasing. So don't be afraid to make a nuisance of yourself in a way, by like emailing, phone calls, you know, because often people will get back

to you, it just sometimes they need a bit of a push. And also don't be, I think, for my cover image and I've got it here actually, I can show you. So for my cover image and it's by Dwayne Michaels and I really I really like the image, and he's quite an established photographer and I was a bit, you know I never thought that he would say yes to letting me use the image on the cover and, but I just asked anyway, and you know he didn't even ask for a fee, so I think sometimes people can be really generous and often like people that you might not expect and so yeah I think again, this kind of, what Alex was saying around you know if you don't ask you don't get so I think it applies to kind of image permissions as well because yeah I was surprised, sometimes by like the generosity.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Lovely, great. And Anouk?

Dr Anouk Lang: yeah so I'm sure, my major tip would be free writing which I'm sure is known by many here. I think free writing is so powerful that I fold it into my teaching. I see a lot of anxiety in students around writing, I think it may be comes with the turf in English literature, we're so kind of hyper focused on the way things are written. Free writing is a really great way of getting past that, and personally I like the site 750 words.com, it's great it's you know provide you with a nice clean interface, it's really doable if you've got like 45 minutes, if you can wake up for the rest of the house, you get your morning words done. There's also a site called written kitten which I like to use with students, they write they get a certain number of words and they get a picture of a kitten. So if anyone's in the audience is thinking about how they might help their students with writing that's quite fun one to use. And the other tip that I would have, and this is going to be more useful for people towards the start of their PhDs, but there is advice about out there to think about your PhD as a book, from the start. And whenever I said that advice, I think well that shouldn't just be on PhD students, it's the responsibility of PhD advisors, and it's also like it's much easier in some fields and others. But even just kind of conceptualizing your project in terms of how it might work as a book is one thing that, you know, can save, you can save yourself some time. And you know if you are supervising students, then you can be on the lookout for things as well. The student I co-supervise and she's just about to submit and as the co-supervisor and I have seen her project coalesce into something, we keep saying to her look this this series that Palgrave that your book would fit into or you know this specific university press I think would be really open to this, so you know I don't think it should be on the student to feel like they, you know, do they do ask their supervisors about this, it should be the supervisor presents themselves as open to you know, I have advice about this sphere of academic publishing and I can I can help you navigate it.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Thank you brilliant and okay, I think it would be really valuable to hear reflections on writing and researching and publishing as an academic with a disability, so if we could spend a little bit of time on that. Shardia, did you have some stuff to share around that?

Dr Shardia Briscoe-Palmer (she/her): yeah so, as I said before, I've got multiple sclerosis and then in 2019 I was diagnosed as having dyslexia as well and my disability and differences are interwoven with my son's disability of autism, they don't exist without taking his needs into consideration as well. Being an academic and writing with support needs again, it is, it is extremely difficult, in that, I think many, many around you, colleagues and sometimes your department, assumes that you're covered because you've got a big kind of disability

Protection Act around you and, therefore, you should have everything that you need, but it doesn't it doesn't happen that way, and you are definitely entitled to additional support needs, extenuating circumstances on medical grounds. You know, additional supervision slots as well if that's the way that your disability or difference and presents itself. So that's one thing I didn't realize from the beginning, is that the kind of, the general one supervisory session a month, I actually could have got more than that, and like to be honest I could have done with it, I think many of us could do with it, actually, but in regards to kind of how I process my work and cognition, I could have done with that. I, you know now, I know I am the best person to know my needs. I know my disability better than anybody else and you know many people, let me know that they have heard of multiple sclerosis, or there's someone in their family or they have a friend, but I'm still the person that lives with it day in, day out so actually I need to inform my supervisor, for example, and now that I'm in working employment my manager, what exactly is my disability, how does it affect or impact me on a working day-to-day basis and what it is I need to be able to continue doing my job, how I do rather than waiting for somebody to come to you because they're not going to come, basically, if they do it's when you know everything falls apart and it hits the floor so.

I think you know, and then, in all of that as well it's whether or not you want to disclose, because you also have the right not to tell anyone or let anybody know, but obviously there's consequences with that in regards to getting the support. And then also potentially others in your in your circle, other PhD peers or your colleagues, but also, depending on what your disability support needs are, also know that there's some support needed there as well, so that's unfortunately something that, you know, you also have to consider as well just because people are not always welcoming and supportive in themselves but yeah so for me, I know my limitations, as I said, I don't work well in the night-time I can feel myself getting fatigued, winter is not good for me at all. So you know to kind of push everything oh you can do in December over the Christmas break and you know that's just not realistic for me. I also suffer a lot with fatigue and a slight change in weather can make me feel a little bit more tired or exhausted than the average day example it's now 12, 13 degrees whereas two weeks ago was like in the in the 5 degrees. That slight temperature changes made my body kind of go into overdrive, which is a bit exhausting, so taking into consideration changes like that, that's specific to my needs as I'm trying to navigate, and I really am trying to navigate and juggle this world called academia, and then it just takes one thing, one relapse, one you know, we're all in at the moment, one positive covid test, or with my son one episode, and whatever I planned and I'm a good planner goes out the window, it doesn't matter how much time mummy carved out to do writing, it just can't happen, and with that it's I've just learned to deal with that, I don't always deal with it well if I'm honest, it's so frustrating, because the demands from work, my own personal deadline demands are still there, but what can you do. You then have to become just human and deal with what is happening at that time because it's to do with disability or support needs.

But you know I'm in a position now where I do have, my department so supportive, I have what I need around me, and I know how to ask for I need around me, and if you don't know where to go or who to ask, either your supervisor should know if you have any disability support needs, your supervisor should know, or know where to signpost you to, at least. And then you know, on the university website, there should be something in regards to disability, even if it's through the guild or so on and so forth, and you know, please don't fall into a trap

where you believe it's okay and you'll just manage because you don't you shouldn't have to manage, and there are things out there for students and staff who have disabilities and learning support needs, to be able to just you know participate to the same level as everybody else yeah.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Thank you, we really appreciate that. And Alex that cover everything or was anything you wanted to add?

Dr Alex Lee: So I think just a couple of things, so I think that we're very good and I say we, like most people are very good at kind of supporting disabled students, we're very good at understanding, kind of fg they're going to need an extension and that's fine. And so I think applying that to ourselves is something that we can do to, kind of not being afraid to ask for an extension kind of. Oh, my body hasn't let me kind of do all the work I need to do, I need to ask for an extension, and that's fine, and just kind of trying to treat it in the same way that we show kindness to students, kind of showing kindness to yourself. I think a lot of what Shardia was saying about just kind of being upfront about it. It's an enormous administrative burden to get all of the access, you need sorted out often. And I think just being upfront about that at the beginning. So, for me, with all my teaching stuff, so just being upfront about it, beginning, so this is what I'm going to need. That meant I had time to do other things, so it wasn't worrying about trying to get it all fixed and kind of trying to tread lightly, that kind of thing. And just being very kind of blasé about it all and I think, and yes just kind of pacing, and people have talked about not working evenings and weekends, so that's something I do also. And kind of allowing yourself to have days off, kind of knowing that continuing to work will not be a good thing. And that when you come back, it will be better, so kind of learning to do that. I know it's very difficult, because we all feel like that we should be working all the time, so just allowing yourself to not do that and have a bit of a rest as well.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Thank you very much. Morna, did you have anything to add about your PhD experience, or has everything been covered?

Dr Morna Laing: And I mean I would echo quite a lot of what the others said around like pacing and knowing your limits, but I think it's also that thing of like recognizing soon enough before you reach, kind of I think, Shardia mentioned like you know falling to the floor, you need to kind of pre-empt that a bit and notice when you're kind of getting near to that. And so I suffered from chronic pain when I was doing my PhD and to the point where I actually took a one year suspension, because I just realized that it wasn't kind of sustainable. I took that year off and actually as Shardia was mentioning you have rights and so I was able to kind of you know, the through the university they gave me like a special chair, and you know, there was there were things that they could give me a home actually that could support me which, which made the chronic pain a lot better. And I think as a member of staff, you also have rights and so you can ask reasonable adjustments and you're entitled to that, so I think it's just you know being, as the others have said, like quite matter of fact about it and you know just knowing that it's fine to ask for the things that you need and to listen to your body, because if you push through it there's always kind of a payback, so I think it's just you know that kind of compassion and patience and kindness that the others have mentioned earlier, I think it's just showing that to yourself in the same way as you should show to students.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Thank you very much, that was really useful. And yeah okay now I want to leave it a few minutes for the questions that have come in and some of them are around getting a publisher on board and sort of that bit of the process. But first I want to ask a different kind of question to you Anouk and that flows into those questions, so you also have experiences editing a connection and you have a role on the university press editorial board, I think, so what guidance could you give about what it takes to get a book proposal accepted or get a paper ready for publication?

Dr Anouk Lang: yeah so I sit on the press committee of Edinburgh University Press, I've done that for a few years, so just to be clear, I'm not involved in commissioning, but I have a sense of like how an author, particularly a first time author I might get their proposal noticed and also kind of good and bad things to do when you respond when you get your peer review reports back.

So the thing about getting noticed, the key thing to do is like to kind of think like a publisher rather than think like an author, which is hard right. But publishers have different imperatives to scholars, so they need a book to succeed in the market, which isn't kind of that's not to denigrate them, like you know they need to keep the lights on and pay their editors, it's not a bad thing that they need books to succeed economically. So when, like when you have that in mind, you need to do two things as an author. First you need to show how your book connects are the scholarship out there, there has to be enough of an indication that what you're talking about is interesting to people, so you know, it's being researched, it's being taught. Such that individuals and also institutional libraries will purchase the book, but at the same time, you can't just be retreading old ground, there has to be something in your argument that differentiates it from books that are already published, that moves scholarship on. So I imagine that those two tensions are something that like we all are aware of, as we do the actual writing, but it's just kind of when it comes to writing the proposal, you have to make you have to kind of write to that frame, so think of those things as your anchoring points- your connections to existing published books and then your interventions where you do something new. The proposals I see it seems like the section where kind of people talk about you know what the existing work and how do you differentiate your books, that less attention goes into that, than actually saying the argument of the book. So give enough attention to it.

And the second thing is like how you respond, like so you get past the first hurdle, and you get reader reports, how you respond to them. Above all don't be defensive, and this is so hard right. You get back a report with criticisms and you feel hurt, and you can't do that, you can't write the response while you're hurt. Put it aside for a few days, come back to it and then write a response when you're in a position to be able to be positive and kind of perform gratitude, if you don't feel gratitude at least perform it for the kind of constructive criticism, even if you don't feel like it was constructive. And I think the tone of the response really matters because it tells the editor like, this is someone who's going to be easy to work with or this is someone who's going to be a pain in the backside and I'm going to have to like go six rounds with them every little detail and it might just be easier not to take up the proposal. So that again is kind of like thinking like the publisher it's like you may know your subject better than the readers but the press will have someone who's more senior or well published who acts like their proxy for the readership for the market. And the press will trust that person who's more senior, the reviewer, so you either need to do as the reviewer says or provide a

really, really compelling reason to stick with your original. So you know when you read advice about this, it says, you know it's okay to push back on something if you feel like you have an insight into the subject matter that the reviewer doesn't. But you really need to pick your battles, especially if it's your first book, so the reality is as a junior scholar you probably don't have a grasp of the market in the way that the publisher does. So unless it's like an actual factual accuracy it's just better to swallow your pride, swallow your hurt, do what's being asked of you and do not come off as a jerk when you write your response, and so that's just from kind of reading proposals and responses.

From my experience of editing books and like being the person who sends out and kind of gets the reader reports in and sends the revisions out and assesses the audience response, like I've seen both these kind of responses, I've seen, you know, kind of senior really established scholars graciously accept their feedback and graciously make the changes and their pieces get better even though they're senior, and then I've seen other scholars just be jerks about it and it's a real no-brainer as an editor, if changes need to be made according to an expert and the author is not going to make them or can't make them, then you can't publish it, you can't put their piece in the collection. I will never forget the two horrible vitriolic responses I had from people who were personally affronted by being asked to make revisions and I'm just never going to work with them on anything, like life is too short, so play nicely, be courteous, make changes.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Thank you, and actually we have a question, I think we can just bring in here to you Anouk and to any of you who have edited a collection. The question is, how do you become the editor of an edited connection, do you like, do the publishers think of a collection and then invite authors and stuff, or do you approach someone and then you put, do you approach and publisher with the idea for an edited collection?

Dr Anouk Lang: yeah I mean it's the same as a monograph you, like you pitch it. So it's pretty rare for a publisher to decide they want one, if it's something like an established series then they might you know approach an editor themselves, but if it's I think the people in this audience it's more likely to be an edited collection on something that's a bit more niche, so yeah you can pitch it. Just in terms of like, how do you get asked to be one, one thing that I've seen people do is kind of pair up so you might have a junior scholar who might have you know, slightly more time and energy and they pair up with a senior scholar, and that can be I think really useful to the junior person because they can ride on the coattails a little bit of the senior scholar, but they also kind of get you know, some experience watching the process happen. Sometimes these things work with conferences, they could be some like really amazing collections that come out of interesting conferences. Quite often, they are built into grants, so if someone is you know got a grant to do a project, then you know, one of the outputs will be an edited collection and you know, maybe one of the junior people on the team, the postdoc will be given that responsibility but yeah you don't need anyone's permission, you can just you can, you can pitch it.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: So I want us to try and finish, we started a little late, but I think it's probably important to try and finish at three. Now, and I think I've gathered the vibe of like the questions in the chat and I think the final question I'll ask the panel will try to kind of get that. If you have questions after, clearly there's a lot of interest in this topic. You can email me at

the Writing Lab and I'll try and see if I can get some more answers to questions from you from within the community later, so thank you audience. Kasia if you could put the feedback link in the chat and then I just want, we yeah we have like three minutes or four minutes left, so I'll just come to each of the panellists again, and just if you have any closing thoughts of how we might go forward after today, so it's very rich experience that we can be with you in the room and hear from you, but if each of us going forward as the early career researchers, do you have any suggestions of what we might do after today, things we might put in place. And there's been some questions about proposals if you've got anything to add there, questions about what you would do differently if you could speak to yourself at the beginning of the process, so just any couple of little thoughts in the last few minutes from each of you.

And Morna I think I'll ask you first.

Dr Morna Laing: Yeah I think for me it's just keeping in mind your motivation for why you want to do the book. Because I think I really struggled with that aspect and I felt like a bit like an administrator of my past self a lot of the time, but just I think if you can kind of keep in mind your reasons, like whether it's political, or whether it's connected to career and dissemination, I think that is really important in terms of kind of keeping the project going.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Thank you. That's really powerful yeah.

Alex.

Dr Alex Lee: So, I think my comment comes on something Anouk said, about feedback. So I take feedback very personally, and I think a lot of us do, especially when it's critical. And so my way of dealing with this is to write on index cards myself, so I kind of reshape the kind of critical stuff and often it's quite nasty, into my own words, so that I don't have to keep looking at the nasty thing, to kind of keep myself on topic, so it's kind of 'do this thing' rather than 'this is wrong, this is completely wrong and bad' so just to make it a slightly nicer process for myself, because I completely agree it's really necessary to respond to all of these criticisms.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Great.

Shardia.

Dr Shardia Briscoe-Palmer (she/her): I find it very useful to have someone to write with, so writing retreats or just a writing buddy and I find really useful, and if you if there's no writing group make one.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Really good point so if you're not sure about this that we run writing retreats online at the moment in the Writing Lab every week and we encourage you to make your own as well, and to do this what some people call, what Shardia is talking about, an accountability partner as well, so writing together, I did that in my PhD. Yes Susanna.

Dr Susannah Gibson: I don't know if I have any particular advice, I find it very, the particular joy of holding up a copy of your published book at the end of this horrible process is really nice motivator, so on all the dark days and days and you feel like you've written absolute nonsense

and you've not written anything at all, or suddenly had to go and meet students, or cover someone else's work or something like that, just reassure yourself, but there will be a day when the book exists and you can hold it up, where it's such a nice feeling. I mean so yeah it's difficult but try and keep positive and as lots of people here have said, build up a community around yourself, of people, you know that positivity around yourself, and you will just keep writing, and it will happen eventually. Yeah and good luck.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Thank you, and Anouk.

Dr Anouk Lang: I don't have much to add, I guess, like, writing is social, find a writing group as Shardia said, find a critical friend, apart from anything it'll help your mental health, it'll go easier, it's a tough task, so yeah be kind to yourself, do it with other people where you can.

Kerry-Jo Reilly: Thank you. Great and so yeah today was you know, came out of some discussion, some of us were having at UCL and you can see that not all of us today from UCL, there's lots of shared experiences across, not only this country, but other countries that we're in today, and so do let me know, here's my email address, if you want us to carry this conversation on, if we didn't get to your question and yeah we'll try and see what else we can do to support you in this process and we go, yes, there you go. I hope we set you off well today but maybe we can even do more with the Writing Lab.

Thank you everyone for being here, really, really excellent panel. Thank you so much for all being here and in your busy lives as well. So yeah and you've got the feedback in the in the chat there, so thank you very much, everyone, and congratulations on all your research and publishing that you're doing, panellists and audience. Great thanks everyone.