

## ASA News, Spring 2021

### Pandemic Publishing Interview: Boydell & Brewer: James Currey's Jaqueline Mitchell

#### 1. How has the pandemic and the broad suspension of in person events impacted publishing?

James Currey as a small publisher has been hard hit, with the departure of Lynn Taylor, long-time managing editor and commissioning editor of the Literature and Theatre side of the James Currey list. Her legacy continues with strong titles forthcoming and in January came the announcement that Madhu Krishnan's *Writing Spaciality in West Africa* had won the 2020 ALA Book of the Year Award – Scholarship.

The cancellation of the ASAUK conference was a great disappointment, and the moving of ASA and other events online, while a great accomplishment organizationally, meant those collegiate and sociable in person meetings that we all so enjoyed did not occur. There are still good books coming in, but what is missing is the chance conversations and meetings with new people that were so fruitful. We are very active in making new contacts in new ways, of course, and still 'present' at conferences, and hope that scholars see our virtual stands, where newer titles are displayed and on offer. Twitter – @Boydell\_Africa – has provided a great alternative conversation, and this is where you can be alerted to our presence at online conferences, as well as special offers.

#### 2. What have been the publishing trends that you've seen over the last year? What trends are you most excited about?

One noticeable trend has been a strong move towards ebooks and are book sales in this format have risen, with all new books produced as ebooks as well as backlist conversions. Alongside this, we have seen more Open Access proposals, which we welcome. Both these formats will be much more visible and easy to purchase and/or download on our new website, which launches this month, January. This move makes more books available to a global audience online and opens up publishing and its audiences. We continue to work strongly with African publishers, importing books from them as well as licensing JCP-originated books on the continent.

The pandemic also allowed time for more long-term developments: James Currey established two new series in 2020, *Making & Remaking the African City: Studies in Urban Africa Series* and *Future Rural Africa*. There is exciting research being done in and on Africa and its global impact, and we look forward to publishing books that derive from this, and making this research widely available.



**3. Since we still aren't able to get together, how have book pitches changed and what should our members know about the process?**

As always, we are interested in strong books based on primary research and fieldwork (we realise the pandemic will have affected access to the field) that make innovative and impactful contributions to African Studies. Anthropology, Archaeology, History, Politics, Economics, Development Studies, Gender Studies, Literature, Religion are our core subjects. We welcome submissions for newer series, such as *African Articulations*, *Studies in Urban Africa* and *Religion in Transforming Africa* alongside longstanding series on Eastern Africa, Western Africa and African Issues, and stand-alone volumes. Our proposal form and details of the publishing process are available online on our website, at <https://boydellandbrewer.com/james-currey-prospective-authors/>. I would encourage potential authors to get in touch either with me (jmitchell@boydell.co.uk) or series editors about their book projects, giving us a brief description of the book and its audience and/or to send in a proposal form. In the absence of face-to-face meetings, we are using Skype etc. to discuss projects, but it's best that we have an outline of the proposed book first. Do remember to tell us about any previous co-publishing arrangements you have had with African publishers, and bear in mind that the review and publishing process takes time, so don't leave it till you have completed your book to get in touch.

**4. What new projects are you working on that the African Studies community should be on the lookout for?**

2021 sees a lively and growing publishing programme, with new books on gender and the South Africa liberation story in Emily Bridger's *Young Women against Apartheid* (Jan), *Field Research in Africa* (April) which we feel will be essential reading for the African Studies community of scholars and students, and two edited volumes that we are particularly proud to publish: *Islamic Scholarship in Africa* (May), edited by Ousmane Kane, and a book that I hope to be bringing in person to ASA this year: *Sacred Queer Stories: Ugandan LGBTQ Refugee Lives & the Bible* (Nov). To keep in touch with what's forthcoming see our interactive catalogue: <https://boydellandbrewer.com/african-catalogue-2021> Boydell & Brewer has also launched a series of short monographs which will range across all imprints, including James Currey. These are to be books of 40 to 60,000 words, a format which will allow swifter transition from ms to book (c. 100 days) and which, will still including peer review, will have a more streamlined production process to print and ebook. There will be an Open Access option. The future will see further developments at James Currey and at our parent company, Boydell & Brewer, of benefit to the academic community which we serve.