

# COMMUNICATION RESEARCH TRENDS



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## Book Publishing in a Changing Environment

In 1982 Unesco held the first World Congress of Books in London. Its aim was to promote the idea of the 'reading society'. As if to underline the problem facing Unesco in achieving its aim, 1982 was also Information Technology Year in Britain. The juxtaposition of traditional and modern forms of communication is an apt symbol of the theme of this issue.

Since the time of Gutenberg the printed book has held a prominent place in the Western cultural and intellectual system. Today book production continues to increase around the world and developing countries are ever more anxious to combat illiteracy and to encourage reading. Yet in spite of its success, the supporters of the printed book are anxious for its future.

Their anxiety is concentrated upon changes affecting the book publishing industry and the reading public. Critics see book publishing in developed countries becoming a mere adjunct to the mass media industries and the reading public becoming ever more fragmented and smaller. Third World publishing appears to be always in crisis, still dependent upon imported paper, technologies and ideas. The future threatens the decline of the book in the face of the new information technologies.

These and other issues are explored by this report on recent research on book publishing and reading under four headings: publishing in a time of cultural change, the reading public, Third World publishing, and the impact of new technologies.

REVIEW ARTICLE

## Book Publishing in a Time of Cultural Change

Publishers have been characterized as 'gatekeepers of ideas' because of their pivotal role in the process of deciding which books by which authors shall be made available to the public. This 'gatekeeping' function they share with many other professionals in the media

industries. News editors are one example, book reviewers are another. This article reports work by Coser et al. Lane, Bourdieu and Rosengren which examines how gatekeeping functions in a time of rapid cultural change.

### I. Editors and Organizational Change

Lewis A Coser, Charles Kadushin and Walter W Powell. *Books: The Culture and Commerce of Publishing*. (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

Coser et al. examine how US book editors perceive themselves and their changing role and authority. They also analyse the ways in which industry structure, the internal organization of publishing houses and changing marketing strategies are influencing the editorial process.

The authors of *Books* conclude that the traditionally high status and power exercised by editors in firms publishing general trade books is being undermined. Power is moving to the buyers and sellers of subsidiary rights as publishers devote more energy to the search for 'blockbuster' bestsellers which can be promoted in a variety of media.

Coser et al. interviewed 100 editors in a variety of houses and conducted participant observation in 12. The houses ranged in size and complexity from small independent firms employing fewer than 20 people, to large conglomerates employing over 100.

Authors, literary agents, reviewers and booksellers were also interviewed.

The growth of larger and more complex organizations, allied to an increasing emphasis on maximizing return on investment is altering the conditions under which editors work and the premises which guide their decision-making. Editors find that they must give more time to administrative tasks, and that lines of communication within the organization are longer. Editors spend less time editing, and less time with authors. In addition many authors now negotiate through agents or lawyers. Editors find themselves more isolated from the creative process. This is one reason why several large firms such as Simon & Schuster have recently set up smaller personal imprints within the company to give greater scope to their most successful editors and to bring them into closer contact with others.

## A Two-Tier Industry

Coser et al.'s analysis of the structure of the publishing industry concludes that a two-tier system is developing. The top tier consists of a small group of large corporately owned firms which are oriented towards large volume sales and which are adopting ever more sophisticated marketing and promotional techniques to guarantee sales in a high risk mass market. The second tier is composed of a larger group of independent, small, specialized firms. In between these groups the middle range general publishers (such as Scribner's) are finding it ever harder to compete. They are becoming more unwilling to take a chance on publishing books which do not fall easily into the mass or specialized markets. 'Middlebrow' fiction — neither commerce nor culture — is a particular sufferer. Serious and original books are still published, but by smaller houses, in smaller print runs (5,000 to 25,000 copies) and at higher prices.

## The Search for Bestsellers

One important effect of corporate ownership is that firms are coming under ever more pressure to increase growth, either by publishing more books, or by issuing more big 'blockbuster'

## II. Commerce and Culture

Michael Lane with Jeremy Booth. *Books and Publishers: Commerce Against Culture in Postwar Britain*. (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1980).

Pierre Bourdieu. "The Production of Belief: Contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods". *Media Culture & Society*, Vol 2, No 3 (July) 1980, p. 261-294.

The focus of Lane's study is the British general publisher: the firm which publishes a variety of books intended for the non-specialist reader. Lane examines the explicit and implicit assumptions publishers make about their role as cultural entrepreneurs. His conclusion, reached after extensive field research between 1966 and 1975 in which he interviewed 190 publishers and studied one firm in detail, is that British publishing is failing to adapt to new cultural and economic pressures. It is increasingly just another branch of the mass media industry.

## Traditionalists and Modernists

Lane identifies two opposing models or ideologies among publishers: traditionalism and modernism. The traditionalists believe that the job of the publisher is to publish books of merit which will contribute to the enrichment of the general literary culture. They see themselves as impartial arbiters employing generally accepted cultural and moral criteria to decide what to publish. They accept that few people are capable of either creating or appreciating cultural works and so often publish for a relatively small body of discriminating readers. They see themselves as men of letters rather than businessmen. They feel a duty to publish a certain number of unprofitable but worthwhile books.

The modernists see publishing in more straightforwardly commercial terms. They see themselves as 'tastemakers' as well as 'gatekeepers' and are prepared to try and originate books which will appeal to a popular market. For them publishing criteria are based on consumer preferences expressed through the market, and they are much more profit-oriented than the traditionalists.

On the whole, traditionalists belong to an older generation (many began their careers in the 1930s) and are thus often among the leaders of the publishing world. They tend to work in smaller, more loosely organized houses. Modernists are usually younger and tend to belong to larger, more formally organized firms. However, most publishing houses display a mixture of traditionalist and modernist features, the exact balance depending on the age and character of the firm.

## Economic and Cultural Challenges

The traditionalist leaders of British publishing have failed to come

bestsellers. There is pressure to maintain a steady flow of commercially successful products. Editors are encouraged to sign up writers of proven success whose work can be exploited in a variety of formats.

The emphasis on 'blockbusters' is a conservative strategy designed to minimize the risks of publishing in an unstable and fickle market. These books are designed as media 'products' which can be advertized and promoted in a systematic way. Tie-ins between books and films are liked because the success of one product contributes to the appeal of the other. Good examples of this process are 'novelizations' of successful films such as 'Star Wars' or the selling of film rights of bestsellers such as *Love Story*.

Another increasingly common phenomenon is the signing up of 'star' authors. These authors guarantee large publics, and in turn they demand large payments in advance of publication. The astronomer Carl Sagan, for example, was offered \$2 million by Simon & Schuster for the hardback and paperback rights on the basis of an outline of his first fiction work. A consequence of the large sums of money being offered for a few mass appeal books is that there is less money available for other authors.

to terms with two fundamental challenges. On the economic front, publishing houses are increasingly being taken over by businesses outside the trade and there have been many mergers. Power and market share is being concentrated in ever fewer hands. The typical middle-sized general house of the past finds itself increasingly squeezed between large agglomerations of imprints and very small highly specialized firms.

A good example of a specialized imprint is Virago, which specializes in issuing works by women writers. These imprints point to the challenge posed by an increasingly multi-cultural and pluralist society to the traditionalist conception of a single, unified culture. Because traditionalist publishers insist on behaving as though their restricted public is representative of British culture, they are psychologically ill-equipped to find new ways of publishing for different markets. They are failing also to recruit into the business sufficient numbers of creative people from more diverse social and intellectual backgrounds and tend to rely still on a small upper and middle class educational élite.

The central problem is that as traditionalist attitudes decline, a crude version of the modernist ideology is starting to dominate publishing. Up to now even large firms owned by non-publishing companies have been prepared to subsidize general list publishing out of the profits from educational or other specialized activities. Lane argues that pressures to maximise return on investment will grow and cross-subsidization will become less common. At the same time rising costs of production and distribution, as well as increased salary costs and advances to authors, are restricting entry of new firms into the market. The small and medium-sized general publisher that once sought to diffuse new ideas among the public at large seems about to disappear. The result can only be to further emphasise the fragmented nature of contemporary intellectual and literacy culture.

## Cultural Capital and Economic Profit

Lane analyses the fundamental contradiction between the publisher's subjective perception of his social role and the objective character of the industry. Publishing is part of a market economy, yet many publishers still have an ideology explicitly favouring the expression of cultural values above the pursuit of profit.

This contradiction is the focus of Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the art business in France. Bourdieu sees the disavowal of purely economic motives by cultural entrepreneurs (art dealers, theatre owners, publishers, etc) as one example of the many ways in which people engage in collective 'mis-recognitions' of the realities of social and economic power.

Bourdieu contrasts the economic strategies of 'commercial' and 'cultural' publishing houses. An example of a commercial house is Laffont, which is a large (700 employees) firm owned by Time Life Inc. It publishes 200 or so titles each year and expects large sales (print runs are between 20,000 and 100,000 copies), low unit costs and quick turnover to make a profit. The majority of its books are translations of best selling foreign authors and works by popular French writers.

In contrast the cultural firm of Editions de Minuit is small (12

employees), privately owned and publishes fewer than 20 titles a year. Most print runs are under 3,000 copies, and it usually makes a loss on new books. Minuit survives on the profits generated by its backlist of steady selling books which have become classics. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, for example, sold under 200 copies of the first edition in 1952 but by 1977 had sold more than 500,000 copies in total.

Bourdieu characterizes the cultural firm as one which builds up an accumulation of symbolic or cultural capital in the form of new books. Though at first unprofitable, these books in the long term guarantee economic profits. Gallimard, for instance, once a small cultural publisher of avant garde books, grew into a large commercial company on the strength of its back list of modern classics.

### III. The Role of the Reviewer

Karl-Eric Rosengren. *The Climate of Literature: Sweden's Literary Frame of Reference, 1953-1976* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1983) (*Culture Indicators: The Swedish Symbol System 1945-1975; Report No 5*).

The critical assumptions and aesthetic beliefs held by book reviewers in the daily press are important indicators of the prevailing literary and cultural climate. Reviews and reviewers, universities and specialist periodicals are key elements in a literary milieu which provides the critical environment for the production of élite literature. Authors whose works are not accepted by this milieu will find difficulty in being published, and the critical feedback provided by reviewers can be important in encouraging certain literacy fashions.

Rosengren is interested in observing the way reviewers reflect and assist in changing cultural assumptions. His object of study is the literary frame of reference which is dominant at particular times. A reviewer's frame of reference can be reconstructed by noting which *other* writers are mentioned when a particular book is reviewed. By categorizing these mentioned authors by sex, age and language, Rosengren is able to use them as 'cultural indicators'

marking changes in the literary climate.

On the basis of these 'cultural indicators' Rosengren argues that the post-war literary frame of reference was democratized and popularized. Writers of detective, crime, science fiction, and fantasy works received increasing attention. Overall the period saw a decline in the influence of French, German, and Scandinavian authors in favour of English and American ones.

Rosengren also notes the possible emergence of a narrow, self-contained publishing world oriented towards a tiny intellectual public. Publishers are given subsidies to publish the works of 'serious' writers (also state subsidized) whose work is written for and evaluated by reviewers — the majority of whom are also 'serious' writers. This self-perpetuating system remains quite distinct from the 'book of the month' system in which so-called entertainment literature is reviewed by professional reviewers for the wider public.

## The Reading Public

Relatively few publishers base their decision to publish a particular book on the results of empirical market research into the tastes of the reading public. In recent years, however, certain publishers, especially in West Germany, have begun to encourage both long-term basic research into reading habits and short-term market

surveys. At the same time, media researchers from different countries have begun to develop new methods of reading research. The research studies reported by Dorsch and Teckentrup, Peter Mann and Michel Gault provide an introduction to international work in this field.

### I. New Directions in Bookmarket Research.

Peter E Dorsch and Konrad H Teckentrup, eds. *Buch und Lesen International: Berichte und Analysen zum Buchmarkt und zur Buchmarkt-Forschung*. (*The Book and Reading International: Reports and Analyses of The Book Market and Book Market Research*). (Gütersloh: Verlag für Buchmarkt- und Medien Forschung, 1981).

*Buch und Lesen International* contains information on current book market research in 27 countries as well as surveys of Latin America and Africa. As the editors point out, however, international comparison of results is nearly impossible as even the term 'bookmarket research' has many different meanings in different countries.

Though research results are difficult to compare, the dominant ideas about the proper social role and functions of books and reading can be compared. Dorsch observes that the primary functions assigned to the book tend to differ along the east-west, north-south axes. Third World countries primarily value the book as an agent of cultural consolidation and national independence. Communist countries regard it as a means of education, especially political education. In the West it is generally considered as a marketable

consumer product and as a means of cultural preservation.

Differences in research methods reflect these underlying assumptions. Researchers in the USSR, Hungary, Poland and Romania, for example, are interested in the sociology of reading behaviour and in devising methods to understand better how the cultural and political function of the book can be realised. A variety of methods are used from the uses and gratifications approach to models which analyse the role of reading in the whole context of everyday life such as symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology.

Dorsch suggests that western researchers, still primarily concerned with surveys of consumer behaviour and most often using a uses and gratifications approach, could usefully adopt some of the methods developed elsewhere. These methods could prove fruitful in understanding the book market in non-western contexts.

## II. Readers and Their Books

Peter H Mann. *From Author to Reader: A Social Study of Books*. (London: Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982).

A good example of the western approach to book market and reading research is given by Peter Mann. Mann's book examines the process by which books are brought from author to reader. He considers authorship, publishing, bookselling, libraries and reading. This is a step towards understanding the workings of the book market as an integrated system. Within this context Mann is interested in what people are reading books for and what satisfactions they derive from reading. This leads him to adopt the uses and gratifications model, which he applies most thoroughly in his studies of women readers of romantic fiction.

A 1980 readership survey in Britain revealed that 45% of adults over the age of 16 (42% men, 47% women) claimed to be currently reading a book. Of the 65% of readers who were reading fiction,

three quarters were women of whom 25% were reading romantic and 16% historical novels.

Mann points out that the largest British publishers of such work, Mills & Boon, publish 14 new titles each month, of which 10 are later issued in paperback in print runs which in total come to over 1 million copies. These books are not only read but bought regularly by women from all age groups, all levels of education and all social classes. Far from being 'mere' escapism, this romantic fiction performs a valuable function in the lives of many women, providing them with a necessary source of relaxation in the midst of busy work-filled lives. Readers are in little danger of confusing the work of romance with the world of real life.

## III Changing Patterns of Reading

Michel Gault. *The Future of the Book: Part II: The Changing Role of Reading*. (Paris: Unesco, 1982).

Gault argues that surveys of reading behaviour in different countries reveal that books are now a mass medium attracting large numbers of the population. However, despite recent trends towards an increase in book readership, in most countries roughly 50% of people read relatively little, if at all.

Gault's ideal is to democratize access to books and reading, and so he is concerned that effective strategies be employed to encourage 'non-readers' to become acquainted with books. He reports two recent surveys, one in France (Bordeaux) and the other in Yugoslavia (Slovenia) which offer some insights into why literate people do not read.

First, it appears that there is a link between activity and reading: the less active (especially culturally) people are, the less they read; secondly, non-readers tend to come from families where reading is not important: schools alone cannot make up for the lack of a

home reading environment. Gault argues that it is possible to devise effective ways to reach non-readers. He points, in particular, to the success of the free access, multi-media public information library in the Pompidou Centre in Paris. This library, situated in a social and cultural centre attracting a wide range of visitors, is used by many people who would not normally borrow books from a traditional library. It seems that the users of such a library are beginning to integrate their use of books with a wide range of other media.

Even more important than the setting up of such free access libraries is the development of educational strategies which promote reading and not just literacy. At present, children tend to learn the reading skill but often fail to find pleasure in reading books. At the very least more attention could be given to supplying children with school texts that are readable as well as informative.

## Publishing in the Third World

While critics in the industrialized nations of the world worry about the possible decline of 'reading culture', Third World countries are struggling to promote literacy and to build up viable publishing industries. Research on Third World publishing, therefore, is most concerned with analysing and finding solutions to the practical problems of building up the book industry. The following section

reviews current approaches to understanding three of the most pressing issues: the influence of multinational publishers on indigenous cultures, the economics of Third World publishing, and the politics of 'cultural paper'. The study by Altbach and Rathberger sets these specific issues in the larger context.

### 1. Indigenous Publishing: Some Key Problems

Philip G Altbach and Eva-Maria Rathberger. *Publishing in the Third World: Trend Report and Bibliography*. (New York: Praeger, 1980).

Altbach and Rathberger identify six central issues which must be addressed by publishers in Third World nations.

These issues are: 1) the inadequate systems of book distribution; 2) the difficulties of publishing in multilingual countries and the continuing domination of the major European languages; 3) the problem of determining the proper role of government vis-a-vis private companies in promoting indigenous publishing; 4) the need to build up a cadre of trained and committed publishing professionals; 5) the need to establish publishing on a more secure economic basis; and 6) the dependence of Third World countries on industrialized nations, especially their reliance on imported books, printing equipment and paper. International copyright and translation arrangements also favour the interests of industrialized countries.

Perhaps the most difficult problem facing Third World publishers is how to develop appropriate indigenous models and structures of publishing. Even in countries such as India and Nigeria, where there are relatively flourishing indigenous industries, an imported western intellectual and professional model of publishing is still dominant. This western model tends to stress the publishing of well designed, high quality, well made books for relatively small publics. In Altbach's and Rathberger's view, the need is rather for the mass production of cheaper books using low-grade paper and in a standardized design. Above all, publishers need to look to their own social and cultural roots to encourage new models of publishing. Authors, too, particularly scholarly writers, need to support their local publishers and direct their attention more to a local rather than international readership.

## II. The Cultural Influence of Multinationals

Rowland Lorimer "Multinationals in Book Publishing: Culture Homogenized". *Media Information Australia*, No 39 (August 1983), p. 35-41.

In a study of elementary reading books used in Canadian schools, Lorimer shows how the multinational character of book publishing mediates outside cultural influences.

Lorimer analyses the content of two reading series designed for children aged from 9 to 11. Lorimer finds that the series *Starting Points in Reading*, published by the multinational Ginn Company, draws much of its inspiration from US models — its Canadian content is only 15%. The series focuses on the conflict between the individual and society and simply ignores the distinctiveness of Canadian culture. *The Language Development Reading* series, in contrast, has a Canadian content of 81%. It, too, is published by a multinational, Nelson Canada, a subsidiary of the Thomson Organization.

The focus of the Nelson: Canada series is the Canadian community, which it treats in an idealistic but concrete way. Lorimer attributes its superiority over the Ginn Series to the

influence of the editor-in-chief, John McInnes, who has a great deal of editorial control. Lorimer, however, doubts if Nelson would allow any new editor such a degree of autonomy and believes that market pressures may eventually make McInnes' programme less distinctive.

Lorimer's argument is that the social ideas found in school reading texts published by multinational companies are preparing children to live in a multinational-dominated world. The texts do this by presenting children with a world in which cultural differences and identities are deliberately ignored. This means that the same reading books can safely be marketed in a variety of countries at once.

Lorimer's research could well be replicated in other countries, particularly those in the Third World, which are concerned with the cultural impact of multinational enterprises.

## III The Economics of Publishing in Indonesia

Eduard J.J.M. Kimman. *Indonesian Publishing: Economic Organizations in a Lagganan Society*. (Baarn, The Netherlands: Hollandia, 1981).

Most discussion of economic development issues has been about national policies and planning rather than about the management and co-ordination problems of individual firms. Consequently, in countries like Indonesia, for example, little is known about how economic organizations actually work. Kimman's study of Indonesian publishers is a recent attempt to develop an economic model which can help in understanding how indigenous firms actually do business.

Kimman points out that the potential public for printed media in Indonesia is 15 million people. Yet there is no mass market for books. This is accounted for by two related factors: 1) the working of the Indonesian economy not as a national market but through a host of more or less isolated local bazaars; and 2) the efforts of publishers to minimize the costs of transacting business through

such local markets by vertical integration and reliance upon family and interpersonal networks.

Indonesian publishing houses are family firms which stand in a 'preferred' relation to their suppliers and clients because of ethnic, kin, religious or personal ties. Trade proceeds through these 'langganan' networks and it is difficult and economically risky for publishers to seek out markets which do not correspond to these traditional networks.

This analysis suggests that economic models developed on the basis of western experience can seriously hinder a proper understanding of Third World publishing needs. Indonesian publishers do business within a social and economic context, 'the langganan society', which has no counterpart in industrialized market economies.

## IV. The Politics of 'Cultural Paper'

Jörg Becker. *The Geopolitics of Cultural Paper: International Dimensions of Paper Production, Consumption and Import-Export Structures*, 1981. (Background Paper for Unesco World Congress on Books, London, 1982).

The dependence of Third World publishing on industrialized nations begins with their need to import the costly 'cultural paper' required to make books. As Becker points out, the paper industry is one of the most concentrated in both an economic and a geographical sense. Paper production is concentrated in North America, Scandinavia and Western Europe and the industry is dominated by a few large multinational companies. These multinationals are geared to producing for the paper-consuming industrialized nations. North America, for example, consumes 42.5 kilograms of newsprint per person per year, while the equivalent figure for Black Africa is only 0.8 kilograms. Even the paper plants set up by multinationals in countries like Brazil and Cameroon produce for export to the developed nations.

Becker argues that Third World countries need to develop national policies for cultural paper. As a model of what can be

done, he cites the Mexican PIPSA company, which is the national producer and importer of paper. The advantages of a national paper policy are a reduction in dependence on the world market, a stimulation of domestic production at times of paper shortage and ensuring a sufficient supply of paper for national school book production. The main drawback to such a system is the possibility of governments using paper allocation as a means of censorship.

A pressing future need is the development of alternative sources of paper as present production methods are highly energy-consuming, polluting, and contribute to the deforestation of tropical forests. The complex problems raised cannot be solved on a national basis alone and any restructuring of the present system will need to take account of economic, social, cultural, political and ecological issues. Becker urges Unesco to take the lead in promoting international discussion, research and action.

## The Impact of New Technologies

Priscilla Oakesshott and Clive Bradley, eds. *The Future of the Book, Part 1: The Impact of New Technologies*. (Paris: Unesco, 1982).

Just as book publishers are already part of the mass entertainment industry, so now they are becoming part of the information and

computer industries. This is happening at both national and international levels. At the international level the increasing importance of producing material for publishing in electronic form is yet another serious handicap for authors and publishers in Third World countries. Before they have developed strong indigenous publishing industries based on print on paper, Third World nations are faced with the challenge of entering a global electronic information system.

This issue is just one of those raised in the collection of essays edited by Oakeshott and Bradley. The collection attempts to offer some idea of how book publishing is being affected by new information technologies. The consensus is that two major trends are developing.

### **Authors and Publishing**

The first is that the relationship between authors and publisher is likely to change. Particularly in the academic sphere, authors are more and more using word processors and are increasingly willing and able to provide publishers with texts in machine readable formats. These technical developments are enabling authors to control the production of their work. In the long term this could

## **Understanding the Changing World of Publishing**

The research discussed in this issue has emphasised the changing environment of book publishing. In the industrialized and the developing countries publishers are faced with the question of defining and defending their social role. At the same time the reading public is revealing itself to be a diverse and complex phenomenon: new specialized publics are appearing while a traditional 'middlebrow' public seems to be ever harder to find. While publishers struggle to make sense of these issues the inexorable advance of new technologies threatens to transform book publishing into a relatively minor branch of information processing.

### **Publishing Ideologies and Cultural Indicators**

The effect of cultural and organizational changes on contemporary book publishing is well analysed by Lane and Coser et al. Their research indicates the probable impact of these changes on the content, and on the range and diversity of books published, without, however, suggesting ways in which changes in content and diversity might be objectively charted. What is needed are some equivalents of Rosengren's cultural indicators which would mark stages in the shift from 'traditionalist' to 'modernist' notions of publishing. Such a model could be a step towards refining and extending the idea of publishers as 'gatekeepers of ideas'. Is there a way, for example, of mapping the publisher's cultural and intellectual frame of reference? Can the frames of reference of publishers, reviewers, authors and the buyers of books be analysed in relation to each other?

### **Widening the Scope of Reading Research**

As far as reading is concerned, a pressing need is for researchers to agree on mutually compatible methods for obtaining and interpreting data. Without such agreement it is difficult to compare reading trends over time and across cultures.

Another pressing need is for reading researchers to integrate their studies into a broader theoretical framework. In an important chapter in *Buch und Lesen International* Konrad Teckentrup makes an attempt to construct a model which offers a way of examining the readership of books in relation to the total publishing process by which books are brought from author to reader, and in the context of the social, cultural, economic, political and media environment. Such a model provides a way of relating book market research, reading research, publishing research and mass media research. It should help avoid treating books and reading in isolation from other areas of communication study. It is also a step towards

threaten the jobs of typesetters and other skilled printing personnel. At the same time, the ability of publishers to store texts in electronic form offers the possibility of 'on-demand' publishing in which highly specialized works could be printed only when specifically requested by customers. This would offer new opportunities for authors and publishers to cater for very small publics.

### **Electronic Publishing**

The second major trend is the emergence of 'electronic publishing'. The consensus seems to be that 'narrative' works such as novels, monographs, etc, will continue to be published as print on paper. However, 'access' works, such as dictionaries, encyclopaedias and other reference sources will increasingly be available on videotex and on other electronic information systems. An example is provided by the specialized publisher, Butterworths, which both publishes legal books, and runs a full text legal database in Britain. The continuing demand for up-to-date, easily accessible information on a variety of technical, scientific, social, economic and legal topics is encouraging publishers to become information providers and to invest in the development of electronic data bases.

a better understanding of how book publishing interacts with its publics; how publishers in particular actually do work as 'gatekeepers' or 'tastemakers'.

### **Alternative Models of Publishing**

Research into Third World publishing is needed that suggests new and alternative ways of publishing, rather than more research which simply analyses or describes existing problems.

In this context it is helpful to reflect upon Lorimer's analysis of the impact of multinational publishing on culture. Lorimer analyses the content of educational books and shows how it serves the marketing needs of a multinational. However, he also indicates how an editor who cares about improving the quality of content, can influence a multinational's policy for the better. In a similar fashion researchers might analyse the failures and success of indigenous publishing enterprises, trying to determine what factors make for success. If a collection of alternative models can be built up, indigenous Third World publishers will have some sources of inspiration and practice to guide them other than those from the industrialized nations.

### **Publishing and New Technology**

The future of book publishing in relation to information technology is different to forecast. Researchers might begin to study the ways in which publishers' involvement with new technologies is influencing their organizational structure, their marketing practices and their self-image. Also useful would be studies of authors and their use of such equipment as word processors. Most valuable of all at this juncture would be a detailed survey of what is actually happening in the book publishing industry and how far publishers have gone in accepting and using new technology.

### **New Models of Understanding**

It is ironic that as book publishing enters an era of rapid change, communication researchers are only just beginning to study the book industry in a systematic way. For many years book and reading research has been a neglected field, as researchers concentrated on the electronic media and the press. Now as researchers attempt to understand present day publishing and its historical roots, they are faced immediately with the different task of constructing new models of understanding in order to analyse the future shape of the book industry.

Jim McDonnell  
Issue Editor

# Current Research on Book Publishing and Reading

## Australia

**Helen Wilson** (New South Wales, Institute of Technology, Box 123, Broadway NSW 2007) has written "Australia and the International Publishing Industry". *Media Papers No 1, 1980* (available from the Institute).

## Canada

**James Lorimer** (James Lorimer & Co., Publishers, 35 Britain Street, Toronto) has completed *Book Reading in Canada: The Audience, the Marketplace and the Distribution System for Trade Books in English Canada*.

**Dr Rowland Lorimer** (Communications Dept., Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC V5A 1S6) has just completed a book, *The Nation in the Schools* (forthcoming 1984). One chapter examines the effects of the organization of Canadian educational publishing on provincial curricula. He plans to continue research on the relationship between the structure of publishing and the content of Canadian books.

**Prof Gideon Rosenbluth and Prof D. G. Patterson** (Dept of Economics, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Y2) analysed the structure and functioning of the Canadian book industry in *Fighting Words: Public Subsidies and Canadian Book Publishing* (Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, Ottawa, 1981). **Prof Rosenbluth** has recently suggested a solution to the problem of measuring pure price change even though no two books are the same (Univ of BC, Dept of Economics Discussion Paper 83-18, July 1983).

## France

**Robert Escarpit** (Director, Laboratoire Associé des Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication, Université de Gascogne, Bordeaux 3).

**Nadine Toussaint-Desmoulins** (Institut Français de Presse et des Sciences de l'Information, 83 bis, rue Notre-Dame des Champs, 75006 Paris) is studying economic concentration of book publishing in France.

**Unesco, Division for Book Promotion and Encouragement of International Cultural Exchanges** (7 place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris) is active in all areas of book development. There are regional book development offices in Tokyo, Karachi, Yaoundé, Bogotá and Cairo.

## Ghana

**S.A.A. Djoletto** (Executive Director, Ghana Book Development Council, PO Box M430, Ministry Branch Post Office, Accra) has recently completed a study of the *Book and Reading Situation in Ghana* for Unesco. He is also contributing to a projected book: *Publishing in the Third World: Knowledge and Development*, to be published by Heinemann.

## Great Britain

**Peter J. Curwen** (Dept of Economics and Business Studies, Sheffield City Polytechnic, Pond St, Sheffield S1 1WB) continues to monitor economic development in the UK publishing industry. He is particularly interested in academic publishing and the interpretation of statistics.

**Dr Peter H. Mann** (Director, Centre for Library and Information Management, Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 3TU) remains interested in studying the social aspects of books and reading and the role of libraries in modern society. He is currently compiling a special library catalogue to enable fiction readers to find alternative authors.

**Hans Zell** (Hans Zell Publishers, An Imprint of K G Saur, 14 St Giles, PO Box 56, Oxford OX1 3EL) has prepared *Publishing and Book Development in Africa: A Bibliography* (Paris: Unesco, forthcoming) and continues to edit and publish *The African Book Publishing Record*.

## India

**Abul Hasan** (Special Officer, Book Division, Ministry of Education and Culture, Shastri Bhavan, New Delhi, 110001) is preparing a study on book publishing

in Asia in the context of new challenges in this field. He is planning a monograph on book promotion in the Third World with particular reference to the conclusions of the World Congress of Books held in 1982.

## Soviet Union

**Dr Valeria Stelmakh** (Head, Sector of Book and Reading, Research Dept. for Library Science, Lenin State Library, pr. Kalinina, 3, 101000 Moscow) is engaged in studying the problems of theory and methodology of reading and library sociology. She is also involved in the organisation and coordination of research in reading. She recently wrote *Books and Mass Media: Modes of Interaction* (Paris: Unesco, 1982).

## Spain

**Douglas Pearce** (Apartado 275, Estepona, Malaga) is currently planning to carry out research into the functions and operations of government educational publishing agencies.

## United States

**Prof. Philip G Altbach** (Director, Comparative Education Center, State University of New York, Buffalo, NY 14260) is editing a volume of essays on *Knowledge Distribution in International Perspective* to be published by SUNY Press in 1985. Topics include: textbook publishing in the Third World; international copyright; effects of new technologies on Third World publishing; neocolonialism and publishing, and the international knowledge network.

**Eleanor Blum** (Dept of Journalism, College of Communications, 119 Gregory Hall, 810 South Wright Street, Urbana, IL 61801) has co-authored with **Walter Allen** "The Quality of American Trade Book Publishing in the 1980s, a forthcoming issue of *Library Trends*.

**John P Dessauer** (Center for Book Research, University of Scranton, PA 18510).

**Gail P Huetting** (Syracuse University, 708 Bird Library, Syracuse, NY 13210 and from December 16, 1983 University of Illinois Library, 1408 W Gregory Dr., Urbana, IL 61801) continues to investigate book publishing in the German Democratic Republic.

**J. Kendrick Noble** (Paine, Webber, Mitchell, Hutchins Inc., 140 Broadway, New York, NY 10005) is working on a study of the business information industry, to which a number of book publishers are devoting their efforts. He contributed a chapter on book publishing to *Who Owns the Media?* Second edition by B M Compaine et al (White Plains, NY: London: Knowledge Industry Publications, 1982).

**Dr Walter W. Powell** (Yale School of Organization and Management, Box 1A, New Haven, CT 06520) is writing a sociological study of scholarly publishing houses entitled *Getting into Print: The Decision Making Process in Scholarly Publishing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

**Frank J. Sirianni** (Ramapo College, 505 Ramapo Valley Rd., Mahwah, NJ 07430) is doing doctoral research entitled "Book Publishing in Transition: A Study of the Impact of Industrial Growth and Change on Specifically Cultural Products".

## West Germany

**Jörg Becker** (Martin-Luther-Str 7, 6 Frankfurt 1, Fed Rep of Germany) is doing book research as part of mass communication research and is especially interested in the international one-way flow of books, textbook and children's book research, research on the economics of cultural paper, illiteracy campaigns, books and new electronic media.

**Konrad H. Teckentrup** (Bertelsmann Verlag, Postfach 5555, 4830 Gütersloh) has proposed a theoretical model for book market research "Zum Stand der Buchmarkt-Forschung" in Dorsch and Teckentrup (eds) *Buch und Lesen International* (Gütersloh, 1981) p. 21-36, 37-52 (English).

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