


Introduction

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THIS ISSUE IS DEVOTED to a broad and somewhat diffuse topic — publishing in the Third World. The articles are united by a concern for book production and distribution in the Third World rather than by uniformity of views, common disciplinary backgrounds, or similar geographical focus. Some of the essays deal with specific Third World countries or regions, while others concern broad issues such as scholarly publishing and the internationalization of publishing. Two papers examine publishing in Canada and the USSR which are particularly germane to the Third World. The authors include librarians, practicing publishers, and academics from a variety of disciplines. We, as editors of this issue, are convinced that the topic is one not only of analytic interest but of practical importance. In editing this issue, we again found how little research has been done on this topic. The study of publishing is not yet accepted as a genuine field of academic interest alongside studies of other media such as broadcasting and films. We are, therefore, especially indebted to our contributors, who in some cases have had to generate original data for their analyses. We can state, without fear of contradiction, that this issue is one of the very few collections of materials focused especially on publishing in the Third World.

There is no question that the printed word remains a key to knowledge, communications, and in the case of the Third World, sometimes to the creation of a sense of history and nationhood. While other media such as film and television have had an impact throughout the world, their importance is perhaps less in the Third World, and books and jour-

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nals therefore hold greater sway. Despite low (but increasing) rates of literacy, books play a key role in providing training and skills needed for modern technology and education.

This is, to some extent, a period in which books, libraries and the other accoutrements associated with formal education and established culture are under attack. It is our conviction that there is no shortcut to education and that regardless of the means used to educate people in any nation, books will play a key role not only for purposes of basic literacy, but also at the higher levels of technology and culture. The current lack of emphasis on publishing, library resources, and other book-related institutions seems to be an error.

Despite the diversity of approaches and geographical foci evident in this issue, there are some common themes which are discernible. Among these are the following:

1. Third World nations have only recently developed the "infrastructures" of publishing, such as adequate printing facilities, supplies of paper, editorial expertise, and the like. A first phase of publishing development has been achieved in many countries.
2. Book distribution remains a serious problem, especially in rural areas, and this has inhibited the establishment of a strong indigenous publishing industry in many countries.
3. There is relatively little regional cooperation or book trading among Third World nations.
4. Language remains a key problem. The emergence of publishing in indigenous Third World languages has often been painfully slow.
5. Various problems of cultural and intellectual dependency remain critical to Third World nations. The impact of multinational publishers headquartered in the industrialized nations, the role of foreign aid programs, and the general domination of the world's book production by the great publishing nations of the United States, Britain, France and, to some extent, the Soviet Union all greatly affect publishing in the Third World.
6. Relatively little attention has been given to books by Third World governments. Publishing has been neglected and libraries have received only limited attention.
7. Publishing is a multifarious enterprise and it is difficult to generalize about it. The problems of children's books are different from those of schoolbooks which are, in turn, quite different from those of scholarly publishing. In addition, national differences among Third World nations are substantial.

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The Third World has much to learn from the industrialized countries in that the nations of Europe, North America and Japan have already developed publishing enterprises of considerable complexity and sophistication. It is even possible to see that some industrialized nations, such as Canada, share some problems in common with Third World nations. Yet, key differences remain and it would be a mistake for Third World nations to copy the industrialized nations blindly. In all too many cases, the impact of multinational publishers, foreign aid agencies, and the natural tendency to copy successful models have simply reproduced metropolitan practices in the Third World. New concepts must be developed if the needs of the Third World are to be met effectively.

This innovative development is as likely to appear in the activities of publishers as in the articles of academics. Yet the study of publishing has functions to fulfill in providing an analysis of the workings of publishing industries, in examining their impact on societies, and in determining the factors that foster dynamic publishing with a social orientation. It is ironic that the medium most used by academics is the least studied. The energy that is released into critiques of Western domination of the press, film distributors and television networks should have its counterpart in an examination of the power and influence of multinational publishers.

Book publishers have preserved a gentle mystique of public-minded and authoritative midwifery. Enough has now been written by commentators such as Lewis A. Coser, Michael Lane, the editors of this issue and others to show the shallowness of a recent statement by the chairman of a multinational. On being asked to write an article analyzing what factors determined which manuscripts are published and which are not, he replied that he could do that in one sentence: "I publish what will sell and what I like."

Research on book publishing has far to go before it catches up with knowledge of other media. It must not be sidetracked by the many fascinating anecdotal memoirs of distinguished publishers. It must look at the substantial interrelationship between publishing and society. Work should start on an evaluation of the impact of book-aid schemes on the development of local publishing capacity. The articles in this issue either provide background or make a start on the analysis. We hope that these perspectives will stimulate further research and attention to the problems of publishing in the Third World.

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