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Addendum: "Research in Librarianship" Issue
In the article entitled "Publishing Research in Librarianship," (Library Trends vol. 32, no. 4, Spring 1984), pp. 565-66, the publications program of the Special Libraries Association inadvertently was omitted from the list of association publishers. We regret this omission and extend our apologies to the Special Libraries Association.
# The Quality of Trade Book Publishing in the 1980s

WALTER C. ALLEN  
ELEANOR BLUM  
ANN HEIDBREDER EASTMAN  
*Issue Editors*

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What is "quality book publishing?" To the editors of this issue of *Library Trends*, it is the "serious" book. While all of us may have somewhat variant definitions of "serious," we would probably agree that, in general, it is the intellectual or at least thoughtful and thought-provoking work of fiction, poetry, biography, history, criticism, etc., as opposed to the "popular" novel—the gothic romance, spy thriller, western, or mystery—or the "fad" nonfiction book—books on diets, physical fitness, cookery, more or less offensive jokes, and so on. While not all books in these genres are lacking in serious intent or content, most fad or popular books clearly are flashes-in-the-pan, here today and gone by midnight. What we are concerned with are books with high levels of high ideas, content and writing, books which assure—or at least promise—current and, we hope, lasting interest. We are also concerned with their physical beauty and integrity.

Yet what we usually settle for is some reasonable compromise of a decent product, decently produced. Why do we have to endure compromise? Why can't we expect—and get—perfection? For one thing, it is a less than perfect world in which we live and there are many factors

WALTER C. ALLEN  
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which work against perfection. It is some of these factors which we asked authors to explore in these papers. We also sought suggestions for improvement in some of the problem areas, and a number of ideas came forth.

The original purposes of this issue had a rather broad concept: "Publishing in Library and Information Science," by which we meant the role of publishing in our professions, including such topics as on-demand and nonpaper publications, overproliferation, and corporate journal publishers. I discussed the idea with Eleanor Blum, founder of the University of Illinois' Graduate School of Library and Information Science's course on contemporary book publishing. We decided that we wanted to focus on quality in trade book publishing, in view of the fact that many of the other concerns were being covered for libraries elsewhere. There seemed to be very little addressing the question of quality, an issue about which Dr. Blum and I have been greatly concerned for many years. If books are going to continue to be a major factor in libraries for several more decades, which all three editors of this issue firmly believe, we need to be concerned about the many factors which are involved in ensuring quality.

After we arrived at an outline, we enlisted the aid of the third editor of the issue, Ann Heidbreder Eastman, who has been associated with both libraries and the publishing industry for some thirty years as library supporter, publishing representative, American Book Publishers Council/Association of American Publishers (ABPC/AAP) staff member, and ALA councilor, and who knows many of the leaders in the industry. With her advice and help, we identified possible authors; actually finding them proved to be difficult, largely because of the extreme demands on the time of many busy people. (Librarians think they are overcommitted—they should peep into the world of publishing, which seems to be largely populated with workaholics.) We present the results of this planning herewith, in the hope that the issue will be, at the least, enlightening and, at best, an indication of a genuine interest on the part of a number of people in continuing and even increasing a commitment to quality trade book publishing.

Dr. James W. Carey, Dean of the College of Communications of the University of Illinois, is internationally respected for his probing analysis of communications media. Dan Lacy, long associated with McGraw-Hill (and also a librarian, archivist, public library trustee, and teacher of courses in publishing during his distinguished career) has often written on the role of the book in our society. We asked them to contribute keynote articles, Carey's on the book as a medium of communication...
and Lacy's on the book as literature. In "The Paradox of the Book," Dean Carey notes that never has there been so much scholarship on the book as object or medium, in spite of contemporary pressures on literacy and intellectualism, and he explores the reasons for this phenomenon and the possible consequences of this research. Lacy looks at the possible effects of the new technologies on books as we know them and concludes, perhaps not too surprisingly, that the quality of the text is far more important than the format.

In spite of a hectic pace dictated by the appearance of her latest book, *The March of Folly*, with all the consequent interviews and personal appearances, Barbara Tuchman graciously consented to contribute a brief article on "the role of the author in ensuring quality in trade books." She quite correctly notes the impossibility of "ensuring" such a thing and goes on to comment on the various pressures, commercial and societal, which can influence authors, in the process making it quite clear where she stands in matters of integrity and taste.

As noted earlier, Ann Heidbreder Eastman has long been a participant and an observer in the publishing and library professions. She begins by reviewing the present status of relations between publishers and librarians, and then identifies a number of the stresses and strains within both professions which lead to the existing tensions between the two groups. She then zeroes in on the crux of the matter: the shared responsibilities of the entire book community, including the reaffirmation of the importance of reading and the rejection of what she calls the "either/or fallacy," i.e., the notion that we must live entirely with books as we know them or entirely with the newer electronic media. Finally, she presents a strategy for a successful national campaign to promote books, libraries and reading. At once visionary and practical, the program is based on imaginative professional use of established methods of promotion. Given money, massive doses of time and energy, and a renewed spirit of cooperation, the goal can be accomplished.

William Goodman has produced a piece on the role of the editor which begins with a definition of a little-known axiom, "Sifton's Law," and relates it to the publishing scene. He then looks at the contemporary literary world and surveys a number of genres to see if there are projects that should be developed before the end of the decade, projects that are not only worthy but also are commercially attractive. The article is a fascinating exploration of the horizons of the highly respected editor of a firm that consistently receives awards for the high quality of the contents and physical appearance of its books.
We have two short pieces by literary agents. The first by Richard Curtis, of Richard Curtis Associates, Inc., is a statement of what an agent does, with many definitions and examples. It appeared originally in his book *How To Be Your Own Literary Agent* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983) and is reprinted here by permission.

The other piece on agents by A.L. Hart of The Fox Chase Agency, Inc., is at once idiosyncratic and highly informative. At once philosophical and practical, he offers an insight into one of the more difficult roles in publishing, that of the middleman between author and publisher.

Leonard Shatzkin is known throughout the industry as a man of broad and varied experience, with many ideas, some of them controversial, about the industry and its problems. He summed up much of his thinking in his 1982 book, *In Cold Type; Overcoming the Book Crisis*. In this piece for *Library Trends*, he discusses book production technology, present and future. He notes capabilities, used and unused, and offers suggestions for aesthetic and economic improvement. Note the inclusion of the aesthetic function; a rational approach to book production does not have to mean the sacrifice of quality. Indeed, a highly integrated approach can improve quality.

Martin Levin, a veteran publisher and recognized specialist in marketing problems, a founder of the Book Industry Study Group (BISG), and now a practicing attorney specializing in publishing law, reviews the chaotic American scene, from the incredible numbers of books involved (over half a million titles currently available plus 50,000 more published each year) to the equally incredible numbers of returns and their even less logical handling by the industry. He then sounds a clarion call for an end to all this waste, and he offers some concrete and original ideas for the beginnings of sanity.

Promotion is an important factor in the publishing process, as Martin Levin noted. One of the most innovative and best-known promotion specialists in the industry is Esther Margolis, now head of her own publishing house, Newmarket Press. In an intensely practical article, Margolis states the importance of promotion, citing many successful campaigns as examples.

We have so far taken note of many aspects of the publishing scene, pointing out some of the many pressures that argue for or against quality publishing. But no quality publishing can take place in the future without first-rate people in the profession. What can be done to recruit and educate promising young people for leading roles in the publishing process? We asked John Tebbel, author and retired educa-
Introduction

tor, to comment on this topic. Tebbel has the distinction of having headed the only graduate academic program in publishing in this country, at New York University in 1958-1962. He surveys the often discouraging history of education for publishing programs, the present scene, and calls for a more rational, formalized approach. The recent decision of AAP to discontinue its education for publishing efforts underscores the pressing need for the development of new and innovative programs as quickly as possible.

We are greatly indebted to Linda Hoffman, former managing editor of Library Trends, who suggested the issue but went on to bigger and better things before she could work on it; to Susan Dingle, for her devoted copy-editing and suggestions for strengthening articles; and to the Publications Office staff who coordinated production schedules and interceded with the post office to get this issue published and disseminated.
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The Paradox of the Book

JAMES W. CAREY

The idea of the book, which always refers to a natural totality, is profoundly alien to the sense of writing... if I distinguish the text from the book, I shall say that the destruction of the book, as it is now underway in all domains, denudes the surface of text.

Jacques Derrida
Of Grammatology

Our first teachers of philosophy are our hands, our feet and our eyes. To substitute books for all of these is not to teach us to reason, but to teach us to use the reason of others. It is to teach us to believe much but never to know anything.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau
Emile

And when we consider the first use to which writing was put, it would seem quite clear that it was first and foremost connected with power: it was used for inventories, catalogues, censuses and instructions; in all instances, whether the aim was to keep a check on material possessions or human beings, it was the evidence of power exercised by some men over other men and over worldly possessions.

Claude Levi-Strauss in Georges Carbonnier
Conversations with Claude Levi-Strauss

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Paradoxes abound these days and among the minor ones is the following: we are in the midst of an explosion of scholarship on the role of the book in history and society and research into the nature of literacy. At the same moment, literacy seems to be everywhere in decline, an increasingly marginal intellectual skill, and the book, at least as we have known it, seems to be a less important, more ephemeral artifact in our collective life. More important, scholarship on the book is itself a form of revolt, a revolt against the book, against bookishness, against literacy, against textuality, against the very notion of a civilization built upon literacy and the book.\(^1\) What is the explanation for this state of affairs?

The historical significance of the printing press has long been recognized and it is ritually included between gunpowder and the compass as one of the artifacts which defines the beginning of the modern world. However, until recent times the significance of the book and printing press has been assumed rather than investigated. I go too far, of course. Scholarship on the book can be traced back to the Renaissance and it was an active, if marginal, subject throughout the nineteenth century. But it has only been in the last twenty years that the general history of the printing press, the book and literacy in particular, has emerged as a distinctive field in the humanities. Robert Darnton has suggested that the field has expanded so rapidly in recent years that, "it seems likely to win a place alongside fields like the history of science and the history of art in the canon of scholarly disciplines."\(^2\)

The reason behind the emergence of this scholarship is easy enough to locate. The book and traditional literacy is being displaced as the principal medium in which the central transactions of social life occur. Interest in the book as a means of communication has come about largely because of the eruption of electronics, particularly television, within literate societies. Electronics, stretching from the telegraph to computer communications systems, is not, of course, a craft enterprise deriving from ancient lore. Rather electronics is the first of the science-based, science-derived technologies and is unthinkable without the habits of mind, scholarship and social organization made possible by the printing press. Nonetheless, the products of electronics and chemistry, particularly the ability to reproduce and transmit visual experience, have cultivated new habits and practices which have, in turn, not only affected literacy but rendered it radically problematic. The new literacies—visual literacy, computer literacy—have, on the one hand, reduced the privileged and honorific status of print literacy, its unquestioned right to social prestige. Print literacy increasingly looks like one type of literacy among many which precede and follow it. Print literacy
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is one set of intellectual skills among many possibilities and, in principle at least, there is nothing to recommend it over its alternatives.

The displacement of the printing press by the television screen, and other electronic devices then, has focused attention on the conventions of print literacy and has exposed and made problematic the role which the book played in modern history. This was explicitly the case in the work of Marshall McLuhan who was forced to mediate on "Gutenberg's Galaxy" because he found his students living, not in the world of printed texts, but in a new habitus, an electronic village. His argument is, in part, mine: while books continue to play a vital role in our lives and while literacy remains an indespensable skill, the central transactions through which we participate in politics, culture, work, and social life are no longer mediated by the book, printed page or literacy but by a family of other devices, principally the television set but including audio- and videotape and, above all, the computer. Phrases like visual literacy and computer literacy are surely conceits, borrowing a venerated name to honor something neither known nor understood, but they point to a rearrangement in the hierarchy of skills and a revaluing of the importance of artifacts.

Scholarship on the book and literacy is, in one sense, another example of the principle of Minerva's Owl: we focus our energies on a phenomenon at the moment it takes flight, at the moment we are about to lose it. Scholarship becomes simultaneously an episode in nostalgia and a way of finding our bearings in a world that seems to be shifting under our feet.

However, scholarship on the book is not only a reaction to loss and a recognition of how little we know about the skill and artifact through which we have conducted our lives; it has also changed the very meaning of the object under study. We can never again approach the book and the printing press with the Whiggish innocence of our predecessors.

The traditional history of the book is encased within a narrative frame that goes, in burlesqued form, about as follows. The invention of the book, of movable type that allowed for the reproduction of manuscripts in quantity, is the signal event in the creation of the modern age. With Gutenberg's invention, the Middle Ages come to an end and modern times begin. The book represents, therefore, a great divide in Western history, one of those regnant before and after moments. The book represents not only an episode in the history of progress but a basing point from which progress begins and in terms of which it is measured. Similarly, the spread of the skill associated with the book—literacy in the narrowed sense of the ability to read a printed text—is
taken to be a historical divide within every society in which the skill takes up residence. Before and after literacy divides the primitive from the modern, the skilled from the unskilled, the wild and savage from the domesticated and orderly. It is a social divide understood as an intellectual divide—a moment when modern habits of living are made possible by modern ways of thinking, by a modern technology of the intellect. Indeed, the book has come to represent that most metaphoric of all divides, the divide between nature and culture. Speaking is part of our biological inheritance; writing and printing part of our cultural achievement.

The equation of the book and literacy with progress and development has been described as a dogma of modern thought. It is part of a "whig interpretation of history" in which all the forces which retarded or aborted the spread of printing were mere examples of cultural lag or, even worse, the forces of darkness. The book as a marker in the history of communication inscribes not merely a divide in the history of the mind and society but a divide in the history of freedom. Before and after the book demarks besotted ignorance from healthy enlightenment. The books shattered the monopoly of knowledge of the church and crown and ushered in an unprecedented growth in individual liberty. The book and the printing press, above all, created a new form of social life. It brought a rational, critical, inquiring public into existence. The history of the book is everywhere connected to a particular view of political history in which the book aids in the realization of both a more democratic and rational form of political life. Reading is not only something that should be a free activity; it distills the essence of freedom.

In this conventional narrative the book does not refer so much to the wide range of materials produced by the printing press—dime novels and dollar pornography, religious tracts and scientific treatises, historical romances and romantic histories, collected essays and uncollected diaries, philosophical arguments and unphilosophical memoirs—but to an artifact that is an abstraction, a volume transmuted to a symbol. The Book, in this narrative, is a homunculus, an inscription of the social order writ small, that condenses in an artifact a certain set of skills and ideals. The Book refers less to a manufactured object than to a canon: a selective tradition of the best that has been thought and written in the Western tradition. But it condenses, as well, certain skills and values: hieratic literacy, the ability to write, comment upon and interpret these texts in some depth; homo litteratus, a certain social type or figure of unquestioned rectitude and honor; and a certain way of life in which the intercourse with books connects to wider habits of
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feeling and conduct—habits which we call, in the honored sense, bourgeois.

I don’t wish to play the skeleton at what may be a banquet of the book. Yet, I do agree with the headnote of Jacques Derrida, if one can agree with lines so enigmatic, that the book is being destroyed: a military metaphor here used to make a very unmilitary point. The book is being dislodged from its historical niche. The conventionality, the textuality of the book, is being revealed; it is just one more form of inscription among others; print literacy is just one more intellectual skill among others anterior and posterior to it.

The eruption of research on the book and society has a common effect even if scholars are not joined by a common purpose. There is revolt against the book, against bookishness, against *homo litteratus*, underway. It is not the first such revolt, and Derrida is not the first revolutionary, as the quotation from Rousseau indicates. And it is certainly not the first such revolt against bookishness in America. As Neil Harris’ research has convincingly shown, many of the late nineteenth-century movements that created institutions such as zoos, wilderness areas and botanical gardens as well as social movements such as scouting and practical education were attempts to return to nature from the desiccated world of books and literacy. However, the contemporary revolt against the book has a different focus. What Levi-Strauss says about writing has been extended to printing: The book and the printing press are increasingly seen not merely as agents of change but agents of power. The equation linking the book and literacy with wisdom and progress is seen as part of a complex ideology that justified the technology of printing as it served the interests of those who controlled it. The revolt against the book is aimed at an entire way of life represented by the book and the ideology that supports it.

Whatever other fruits the new research on the book yields, it will first usher in a revised narrative of the role played by the book in our civilization. It will remove the book from its pristine place in our culture and soil it—implicate it in the more paradoxical, and unsavory parts of our history. It will also make the book a vaguer object of contemplation. At one time so solid an artifact, so indisputable a reality and presence, something immediate and palpable, the book is now more amorphous, more difficult to trace. The consequences of the book at one time so transparent and unambiguous are now more paradoxical and contradictory, more uncertain and muddled and certainly more suspect. As I have said, the identification of the book and progress—moral, social and economic—is so stitched into our brains, and embroidered
into our culture that we have been slow to realize that the arrival of the book was a harbinger of loss as well as of gain, of ignorance as well as enlightenment, of more subtle forms of social control as well as wider boundaries of freedom.\(^4\) It is not the book and literacy that is being destroyed but the Book and Literacy: the image condensed in an artifact is being displaced by technology and history.

Of course, I go too far. As the old saw has it, the printers never leave us at rest. Now, the printers will never leave us at rest about printing. The expansion of scholarship about the book has not arrived at settled conclusions; it has merely put everything in doubt, thrown every established proposition into contention, displaced our beliefs without replacing them with knowledge. The expansion of research has made the subject more elusive and problematic by incorporating new themes within it, but the overwhelming thrust of this research has been to incorporate the book into the central theme of contemporary scholarship, namely the acquisition and exercise of power.

Research on the book is part of an anticanonical spirit in scholarship, part of an attempt to destroy the very notion of a literary and intellectual canon. This spirit, in turn, takes two forms. In the first place, it consists of showing that the books enshrined in the canon are not there by a principle of natural selection, a kind of survival of the smartest, but present instead a selective and changing tradition. The tradition is everywhere connected to the power and privilege of certain classes to represent the world through books in ways that serve their interests, through interests in the widest sense of the word: economic interests, moral interests, aesthetic interests, intellectual interests. Consequently, the canon of texts is never fixed. It changes in relation to the contemporary scene. “The best that has been thought and written” is a variable collection that shifts with the ebb and flow of the interests, preoccupations, needs and wants of powerful social groups.\(^5\) In short, there is, on the one side, an inevitably arbitrary quality to the books that at any given time comprise “the Book,” and, on the other side, a continual struggle over just which books should be granted canonical status, a struggle that represents the purposes and powers of social groups.

Research on the book is part of this same struggle. The books which are now the object of much research are of the most ordinary sort: the cheap, the popular, the ephemeral, the sensational. Much of the research seeks to elucidate the literary experience of the ordinary reader.

Like much of contemporary scholarship, particularly that deriving from the “Annales school” of socioeconomic history, it is a democratic
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and democratizing movement in scholarship. It is aimed at recovering the ordinary lives of ordinary men and women. It seeks to recover the voice and experience of those who left no imprint on the historical record and whose experience was nowhere systematically recorded. This democratizing tendency attempts to restore disenfranchised groups to a place in history by including their books, their literacy, their reading within the literary tradition. It also derogates and relativizes the "great works" by admitting to focal concern work that had been considered subliterary and antiliterary.

The subliterary and the antiliterary, the nonbook and the antibook, contain, on this reading, alternative ideas of knowledge and culture. The book has always been honored as a technology of knowledge and we have all repeated, until we deadened its significance, the shibboleth that knowledge is power. However, we have never, until recent times, investigated the precise implications of this phrase. The notion that knowledge is power developed in a particular historical context in which knowledge was opposed to ignorance, superstition, and tradition. The power of knowledge, and therefore of the book, was to lift the veil of ignorance, to arm us with the truth that would set us free. Alas, no such complacent and self-congratulatory view is any longer possible. If knowledge is power, it is because it allows us to get ahead with the work of the world. But, so much of the work of the world in the age of the book has been the exercise of dominion and domination over not only the forces of nature but over other men and women, cultures and societies. Knowledge, in short, is the form in which power works its way in the world. Therefore, the powers of the book are everywhere bound up with growth of technological, national, state and class power—the powers of domination.

I have up to now merely suggested that the received history of the book and the received relations between the book and society are gone with the wind. The whiggish saga of social progress in which the wings of learning and labor spring forth from the binding of the book is a story we can't quite bring ourselves to tell any more. I have also insinuated a different narrative, a narrative organized around the theme of power. In this scenario the book is first of all part of the social process whereby structures of power are transformed into structures of culture.

I have rather deep reservations about these revisions in our received image of the relation between the book and society, though this is not the place to develop them. Curiously enough, my basic objection to Marshall McLuhan, who initiated and modernized much of the current research on the book, was that he paid insufficient attention to ques-
tions of ideology, power and class and was much too sanguine in his analysis of the effects of communications technology. That deficiency has certainly been overcome, though I feel rather like a proof of Goethe's maxim: Be careful what you wish for when you are young for you will get it when you are old.

It was necessary to correct both the traditional narrative of the book and McLuhan's rather too complacent arguments concerning the effects of communications technology. It is now time to correct the corrections by foregrounding certain other themes that have also been elucidated within contemporary research on the book. I will mention briefly and in closing but a few of these themes which together with some of the arguments previously outlined will correct and complete our understanding of the relation between the book and society.

The first such theme is the recognition, as in the work of Michael Clanchy, that the book was the culminating event in medieval culture before it was the first invention of the modern world. The book expressed a telos and demand of the medieval world: to produce a literacy that was simultaneously sacred, bureaucratic and learned. Writing was of extraordinary importance to the medieval world and printing was an outgrowth of the search for a capacity to reproduce an alphabetic script on a standard of quality sufficient to compete with medieval manuscripts. The printed book, then, is in the first instance an agent of the continuity of medieval culture rather than its rupture.

The second theme concerns the process by which the printing press was annexed to a tradition of community culture, of rote learning and oral communication which exploited the powers of the spoken word as well as the written manuscript. Much contemporary research is aimed at documenting the argument that writing and printing existed for some period solely for translation into the oral register. At the least, this means that the book can only be understood in terms of the way it articulated with and then transformed the power, nature and practices of the oral tradition.

A third theme, at the opposite end of the historical divide, relates the book and printing to the emergence of the computer. The computer is an agent of continuity and extension of a certain phase in the history of printing and literacy. The glut of information generated by the promiscuous reproduction of letters and type positively demanded a further mechanization—or better an electrification—of the entire process of creating, storing and transmitting information. If the origins of printing are in the medieval world and the oral tradition, its telos is in
the computer. The book can only be understood in terms of its complex relations to the skills and artifacts anterior and posterior to it.\textsuperscript{10}

A fourth theme concerns a shift in the focus of attention away from the book and onto the socially established practice of literacy. Studies in this area are now overwhelming in number, a thick luxuriant and confusing growth of scholarship.\textsuperscript{11} By shifting interest onto the uses and practices of literacy, the social consequences, effects, and status of the book have become enormously complicated. It is now clear that the uses and practices of literacy do not constitute a fixed object. Literacy is a variable practice among social groups and it always has been. It is also a variable practice within social groups; the practice and use of literacy is not the same for contemporary middle class and the middle class of the early nineteenth century, for example. Research therefore has increasingly focused on the shifting and variable nature of literacy and the connection of literacy to other social processes. There is one important consequence of this shift: literacy no longer looks like the great social and intellectual divide of modern history. The literate emerged out of the illiterate and nonliterate the way modern Britain emerged out of ancient England: slowly, gradually and unevenly and everywhere connected to other glacial changes. Moreover, the assumption that the thought processes of the literate and nonliterate are qualitatively different and everywhere the product of training with books is no longer so widely accepted.\textsuperscript{12} The gulf between the ancient and modern, the primitive and the civilized intellectual has everywhere been narrowed. Moreover, there appears to have been a radical shift in the nature of literacy in the early nineteenth century, though it is less important to date it than to recognize it. Traditional literacy is best expressed in Rousseau’s maxim that books should be so thoroughly digested that they become absorbed in life. Traditional literacy involved reading and re-reading a small number of texts and therefore actively incorporating them into the memory and personality structure of the individual. In the nineteenth century, literacy shifts from this ritual model to more of an information process: the wide and promiscuous reading of texts. Robert Darnton has described this as the difference between intensive and extensive reading.\textsuperscript{13} Francois Furet and Jacques Ozouf connect this change to the spread of writing rather than reading, with the ability of the individual to carve out a “free private space for himself” and with the expansion of the market economy and the secular state.\textsuperscript{14} However this change is caught, it testifies to a discontinuity in the history of literacy once reading and writing were detached from the oral tradition and printed materials were widely and cheaply available.\textsuperscript{15}
A final and summary theme in contemporary scholarship on the book is the absorption of the artifact into a circuit of interaction. The book is seen now as part of an activity: "The construal of meaning within a system of communication rather than as a canon of texts."\textsuperscript{16} The circuit of interaction of the book runs from "the author to the publisher, the printer, the shipper, the bookseller, and the reader."\textsuperscript{17} This is, of course, the same circuit, with appropriate modifications, through which all communications run. Placing the book within the context of communication emphasizes the commonness and vulgarity of it as an object. It demystifies it. However, it also makes the book available to us in terms of its relation to technologies of communication which preceded it and to others yet to come. It situates the book in relation to other media—the newspaper and periodical press, for example—which shaped it and which in turn it influenced. Finally, the examination of the book in the context of communication will more clearly reveal its role not only in the processes of power and politics, but in the wider, more significant enterprise in which the rich, organic inheritance of the oral and manuscript tradition was reconstituted in modern form.

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3. The work is as yet unpublished but was presented at the Annenberg Scholars Conference on Literacy, University of Southern California, Feb. 1984.
Paradox of the Book


17. Ibid., p. 67.
The Book and Literature in the 1980s

DAN LACY

The technology of communication of course affects the forms of literature. Homer's \( \mu \eta \nu \nu \ \alpha \varepsilon \upiota \ \theta \varepsilon \alpha \) roars from the bard's throat; Virgil's "\textit{Arma virumque cano}" lies softly on the page. The spread of writing by Virgil's day had already made the epic poem an archaism, still beautiful as the Gothic spires of an American college campus may be beautiful, and still reflecting the grandeur but no longer the vitality of the original.

Similarly, the widening availability of print in the late eighteenth and especially in the nineteenth century led to the dominance of the novel as a literary form, replacing drama. The further cheapening of print in the latter decades of the nineteenth century produced the dime novel as an alternative to live entertainment. Even an invention apparently so remote as the railroad had its effects on literature. By making possible the rise of prosperous, truly national magazines that were able to pay contributors well, the railroad fostered the development and the popularity of the short story.

In our own century the cinema and television have restored drama to its pre-eighteenth century dominance as a literary form, and have given it audiences beyond any earlier imagining. The new media have also affected the character of drama. The capacity to use both close-ups and sweeping out-of-doors scenes has given a powerful flexibility to cinema and television as compared with the constraints of the stage. The recent BBC productions of Shakespeare have offered a fresh and intensi-

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fied perception of these magnificent works. Not only are traditional works transformed, but this new technology has made possible quite new dramatic compositions—new literary forms.

The revival of drama in its new forms now consumes the attention of audiences to an extent never before dreamed of for any form of literature, with television alone occupying an average of thirty to thirty-five hours a week. To a much less degree than might have been assumed, however, has this truly extraordinary development diminished the attention to printed literature. Far more books are sold and apparently read than before the advent of television. And success in one literary form appears to whet, not sate, the public desire to experience the work in another. Popular novels become popular films or television miniseries. A successful film or television series will reignite demand for the book in which it is based; and if the film or series is based on an original script, a novel may be concocted to meet the demand.

We now confront still another remarkable new development in information technology: the computer and related data communications technology, together with the capacity to record in compact digital form text, images, and sound. What effect, we inquire, will this powerful new capacity have on literature and on the book as an embodiment of literature?

I am inclined to believe that the effect will be less than is anticipated, certainly less than that of cinema or broadcast. The new technology will affect profoundly the ways in which literary works are reproduced, recorded, preserved, cataloged and bibliographically controlled. But it is not likely to create new literary forms. The capacity to store, search, manipulate, recall, and instantly convey bodies of individual data is a most important capacity; but I believe it does not, like cinema, provide a new medium for literary work, for new forms in which the human mind can present its considered perceptions of life.

True, there are two possible exceptions to this general statement. A digitized laser disk could record a variety of alternative scenarios, indeed could be programmed to create new scenarios, which would enable a reader, by inputting his choices, to have a part in shaping the outcome of the story thus establishing a new sort of relationship between author and reader. This could be an interesting gimmick, but a gimmick nevertheless.

More important is the fact that the same digitized laser disk can record text, moving images and sound. If one is prepared to read from a cathode ray tube—and that will become less vexing and inconvenient as the technology improves—it will be possible to have the text accompan-
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ied by sound and moving illustrations. This will provide a useful medium for travel books, natural history guides and certain textbooks; but actually the technique is already available in less efficient form as videotapes or films. Like those earlier manifestations, this new technology is unlikely to generate significant new literary works.

We can conclude that the mediation of the human mind in giving meaning to experience that we call literature is unlikely to be affected in a major way by the new technology as a medium. There may, however, be indirect consequences of the new technology as was the case in the relation of railways to magazines. Particularly may this be true in the impact of the technology on printing costs.

The developments in the field of printing during the 1940s and 1950s involved very high-speed presses, special printing plates and laminated paper adhesive bindings. The economies they produced were applicable only to very long runs, usually of at least 100,000 copies, and hence relatively few titles. They made possible the mass-market paperback, making books available at a nominal price within the reach of almost everyone. This sharp reduction in price made possible, and was reciprocally made possible by, the use of magazine patterns of distribution with newsstands and drugstores rather than bookstores as the ultimate point of sale.

These technological and marketing changes made it possible to reach enormous new audiences at great profit to the publishers and authors of books adapted to this format and method of distribution. But these rewards were available to only a small proportion of the titles published annually—a few hundred at most out of tens of thousands. Even at extremely low prices, only certain kinds of titles could find the enormous number of buyers necessary to make this form of publication practical. And the limited number of pockets in newsstand and drugstore racks in the 1950s, as well as limited channels of distribution, imposed a further restriction.

Books offered in the mass-market paperback format as it existed in the 1950s had to sell themselves without benefit of recent reviews or advertising or the assistance of clerks. Since only a few dozen titles were likely to be available at any given outlet, the newsstand rarely rewarded a buyer seeking a particular title. Rather it met the needs of one who wanted simply a detective story, a western, an adventure story, a sexy romance, or a book by a well-known author (such as Earle Stanley Gardner) whose name had the characteristics of a brand-name, assuring the buyer that he was getting a book with the qualities he had enjoyed in the last one.
Of course many excellent books, especially readily recognized classics, appeared in the mass-market format; and their number greatly increased after the 1950s when paperbacks became widely used in schools and colleges and were sold in traditional bookstores. But the primary effect of this technology was to provide very large financial rewards for the writing and publishing of formula fiction crafted to meet the current demands of the mass market and for certain limited kinds of nonfiction works. This concentration of financial rewards was heightened by the increasingly close interrelation of films, television and best-sellers.

Probably the impact of this sort of best-seller fever on serious literary publishing was less than feared. The people who bought gothic novels and horror stories off the newsstands in the millions did not put aside Saul Bellow or John Updike to do so—and indeed writers of that quality themselves shared, if less extravagantly, in the mass-market income. Serious publishers were perhaps more aided in than distracted from their literary undertakings by their mass-market bonanzas. But without question the emphases of publishing were in some measure distorted by these phenomena growing out of the developments of the 1940s and 1950s in printing technology.

The computer-related technology of the 1980s points the opposite way. It lowers the per-title or per-page cost of readying a book for publication rather than, as in the earlier decades, the per-copy cost of reproduction. It tends to make affordable not the production of a great many copies each of a very few titles but rather the production of a great many titles in a relatively few copies each. This will have two consequences. One is that it will be easier to publish works in small editions, perhaps of 2000 or fewer copies. The other is that it will be more practical to do "demand" publishing, in which individual copies are reproduced from a master as needed (in the future more likely from a laser disk rather than, as in the past, from a microfilm negative). Each of these new or enlarged possibilities is likely to be more significant for the publishing of specialized scholarly and technical works than for literary publishing. But the publishing of small literary journals and experimental works may be facilitated. The bibliographical and heuristic power of the computer and the greater ease of sharing resources among libraries afforded by the new technology will also broaden access to less known and less widely held literary works.

In view of all these considerations it seems unlikely that the new technology, for all its vast importance in other ways, will have a major effect on literature, either as a medium creating new forms or as a more
efficient means of reproducing and distributing old forms. Though the artifacts in which it is embodied may change, the literary text will remain.

There will be novels, short stories, poems, and essays, and with rare exceptions we will read them from printed pages and not from the cathode ray tube or the computer printout. The forces that will change literature in the decades immediately ahead are either societal ones affecting the universe of which literature is a part or else forces internal to literature itself. They are unlikely to be generated by the technology of information or communication.

I am no critic of literature, and I feel diffident in suggesting what some of these societal and internal changes may be. But two trends over the last generation seem evident. One is that American, and indeed Western, society—or at least the intellectuals in those societies—feeling betrayed in earlier enthusiasms and suspicious of professions of noble sentiment have forsworn magnificence, whether in literature, art or music. It would be difficult to imagine anyone in our time even attempting to write a *War and Peace*, paint the ceiling of a Sistine Chapel, build a cathedral of Chartres, or compose a Ninth Symphony. No faith in religion, in patriotism or in man would inspire it. We flee the fear of grandiloquence and pomposity to take refuge in minimalism and simplicity. Heroes yield to anti-heroes: Willie Loman replaces King Lear.

The other trend is a rejection by all the arts of a vocabulary worn smooth by use until it seems no longer able to express with precision the concepts of the creator. New tonal patterns, new forms of sculpture and painting and new literary devices are sought. This has given a freshness and vitality to much of the creative work of our time. But a work of art is consummated in its perception. A book is actualized by being read, a picture by being viewed, a symphony by being heard—not through the mechanical acts of reading, looking and listening, but through the audience being penetrated by the creator's work and achieving a new conception. To the extent that the creator abandons a vocabulary familiar to the potential audience—he abandons it indeed precisely because he feels it has become overfamiliar—he forfeits the opportunity for that communion. He creates to express rather than to communicate.

Hence many of the most expressive creators of our time—a Pollock, a Cage, a Pynchon—to some degree fail in broad communication with a large and comprehending audience, while mass audiences are achieved by the exercise of meretricious skill with the opposite concern: with how many are reached rather than with what is expressed to them. To exaggerate the dichotomy: on the one hand those deeply concerned with
creative expression, but not with achieving communication with a
broad audience; or the other, those seeking to profit by a large audience
and willing to shape their creation to whatever will draw the largest
number.

This was not always so. Sophocles and Shakespeare were the most
popular playwrights of their times. The giants of Victorian literature
were also avidly read and some became public heroes of a sort. Even into
the generation just past Faulkner, Hemingway and Eliot, among many
others, wrote nobly and were read widely. And there are not lacking,
even today, those—one thinks of Saul Bellow, John Updike, and Robert
Penn Warren—who are profoundly committed with important ideas
and are concerned to communicate as well as to express them, and who
in consequence have achieved wide audiences as well as critical respect
for both integrity and skill.

It is not the computer or the laser-read disk or the word processor,
nor yet the changing economics of the publishing industry that will
determine with what themes literature will concern itself or whether a
reunion of serious creator and broad audiences can be achieved. The
instruments of literature will remain. The book will still be there, made
easier by the new technology to produce and to distribute, but probably
little changed in form or physical character. Authors and readers will
determine how and to what end their potentials will be realized.

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1924.
Books, Publishing, Libraries in the Information Age

ANN HEIDBREDER EASTMAN


The State of Library/Publishing Cooperation

Three years ago an able editor from Knowledge Industry Publications who was concerned about changes in communication and cooperation among publishers and librarians proposed that I write or edit a book on the past and present of such ventures, but especially on their future. Since I worked for many years in publishing in the school and library market, and since I had related responsibilities when I worked for Dan Lacy, then director of the American Book Publishers Council (now the Association of American Publishers) I sought his advice and participation.

Both of us were interested in the topic, and both of us talked with a number of leaders in the library field to determine whether there was a market for such a book. Regretfully, we had to confess that while we might do the writing, it seemed that few planned to do the reading, so we abandoned the project. (A personal note: Were I ever to write that or any other book about publishing, it would be dedicated to Dan Lacy. His capacity to think about the history of book publishing and libraries, to analyze ideas, and to pass them on to an audience has made thousands upon thousands of people aware of the continuing symbiotic relationship between these two professions [and as Mr. Lacy practices it, publishing is a profession]. One will not fly while the other stumbles and

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falls. The quality of his mind and the generosity of his spirit are attested to in virtually all serious publications about information, book publishing and libraries. He seems able, always, to find the statesmanlike approach to a challenge.

In the three intervening years, concern about the state of publishing and libraries has been considered in a number of books and articles. A sampling of those I turned to in writing this piece are: (1) *The Micro Millenium* by Christopher Evans, (2) *Books, Libraries, and Electronics: Essays on the Future of Written Communications* by Sigel et al, (3) *In Cold Type: Overcoming the Book Crisis* by Leonard Shatzkin, (4) Part I ("The Impact of New Technologies") and Part II ("The Changing Role of Reading") of the Unesco study of the *Future of the Book*, (5) *The 1983 Consumer Research Study on Reading and Book Purchasing* of the Book Industry Study Group, (6) "Reading: Old and New," the Winter 1983 issue of *Daedalus*, and (7) my notes from the March 1984 meeting of the advisory committee of the study of the role of the book in the future.\(^1\)

Undertaken by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, the report on the Library of Congress study will be presented in two parts: a brief overview for the general reader (December 1984) and a resource volume of pertinent data and documents and a bibliography.

Other than Mr. Orwell’s prophecy of bookless homes with huge television screens, what has prompted this attention to books and publishing and the interplay among the kinds of media in the library market? Concern everywhere about change, insecurity and the disappearance of old lines of demarcation and the lack of new ones. While the number of dollars flowing into book publishing has increased dramatically, the number of units sold has not. While the amount of information being generated is growing at unbelievable rates, library materials budgets are not.

Both librarians and publishers have valid concerns about copyright legislation. Authors and other creators, as well as publishers, cannot work for free; yet, the public’s right to know must be preserved. Lack of effective negotiation on copyright has done more harm to publisher/library communications and trust than any other single issue. Until that matter is resolved—until both parties agree to arrive at a sensible solution—probably some of the action I suggest in this article cannot be taken. Publishers and librarians agree on many more issues than they disagree on, but the present antagonistic posture of both parties is inhibiting a great deal of cooperative work.
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The Effects of Automation on Publishing and Libraries

The use of the computer in publishing and libraries is a major reason both groups feel threatened, unprepared, and yes, hopeful. One need not look far to find prophets of the death of the book, indeed, of all print. With every new technological development (film and other audiovisual material, microforms) and new leisure-time devices (bicycles, radio and television), the death of the book has been pronounced—prematurely.

I should confess that I don’t agree that computers will be the final blow to books—for many reasons articulated in Daedalus by Dan Lacy, Samuel S. Vaughan, Lewis Branscomb, William Goodman, and others. The book is uniquely portable, legible, unmechanical. The content of books is important to people, so the medium that brings the content is important too. After all, books have a tremendous head start on the newer media; perhaps some day mention of a computer program or an abstract will bring tears of joy to users’ eyes, but I doubt it.

Like West Virginia, publishing is wild and wonderful. It is an intellectual, exciting, important business to work in. Good ideas and able people count. Publishing is changing, but those characteristics seem still to be there. Young people are drawn to the book industry because they are allowed to work hard and, if they show potential for "thinking like a publisher," they move up from job to job, house to house. One thing is evident: it is not the money that keeps anyone in publishing. Salaries are roughly equivalent to those in academia. As an industry, publishing generates a profit just under what one can earn by investing in safe securities.

But publishing is more than people and books. It is—always has been, and always will be—first and foremost a process or system without which the entire information community, and all its users, would quickly collapse. I am dumbfounded by much that I read about the computer’s potential for instant distribution of all information to everyone in the world all the time. Surely intelligent information scientists and other computer experts realize that if every word written, each bit of scientific data processed, is made available, the wealth of dross would collapse the system. How could we survive if even every book manuscript were available? How could one find the books one wanted or needed to read in all that chaos? Why should library users pay, in one way or another—including taxes—to maintain a system that includes so much ill-conceived and ill-written work, work that doesn’t deserve to be made public?
I am speaking of course of the function of the publisher as gatekeeper. By making a combined editorial/marketing decision, each publisher decides what to publish and at the same time what not to publish. Some magnitude of the problem is suggested in John H. Jenkins’s statement: “A recent New York Times study indicates that the chances of an unsolicited manuscript being published is 15,000 to 1.” I have heard educators, librarians and unpublished authors complain about how “unfair” the process is, about the tremendous numbers of important books that are not being published because publishers are looking only for “blockbusters” and tried-and-true formula books. That simply is not the case. Authors of publishable manuscripts who take the time to study publishers’ lists to determine where their manuscripts might find likely homes and who submit them with informative cover letters will eventually find publishers. If there are great American novels moldering in desk drawers, the reason is that their authors did not sustain sufficient energy and nerve to find a publisher.

One problem today, in fact, is that more and more fiction is being written, in part as a result of its being taught in colleges and universities. Whether a publisher thinks he can publish (not edit, not print, not sell, but publish) it successfully is his decision. What Harper turns down Godine might well accept. Houses differ greatly, and the men (and a handful of women) who run them are individualistic. Like authors (and other people), they have egos, too. They publish to their vision of what their imprint should be, not someone else’s vision. The successful book is that which generates excitement inside the house. It is this excitement that promotion and marketing people work to “bottle and sell” to the appropriate media outside: reviewers, other writers and publishers, newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. The worst thing that can happen to a manuscript is for the person who generated the excitement at the publishing house to lose that interest before the book is published, or to move on to another position. The book can become an orphan; it can be “privatized,” as William B. Decker, novelist and former managing editor at Viking, has said, not published.

I have passed over the third essential step in the publicizing process—the production of the physical book—because Len Shatzkin has covered the topic so completely in his article. Suffice it to say that the computer is making change possible faster in this aspect of publishing than any other—and with potential for savings that will help to keep book prices down. (People who get hysterical about book prices should remember that publishing is a labor-intensive occupation, and that about 85 percent of the actual cost of any book is in people costs. As
salaries have gone up in publishing, composition, printing, and binding—to say nothing of paper production—and as publishers have had to pay higher rents and more for equipment and communication services, the cost of books has had to go up.)

In whatever form information is produced, it has to pass through these three steps of selection or editing, production, and promotion and marketing. Saying this implies that some party—I think it will be publishers—will continue to pay something to the author/creator to make his material public and that, in turn, customers will pay something to acquire the material or to use it. I don’t think we should socialize publishing; I think the capitalistic system works quite well. Authors’ and publishers’ rights of ownership should be maintained.

Let us assume they are, and let us hypothesize that a publisher/producer of any kind of material needs to make a profit of $4000 on one item. That can be done in several ways. He can produce 4000 copies and add a dollar to the cost of each unit. He can produce 2000 copies and add $2 to each unit. Or, at the other end of the scale, he can produce one copy on a video disk and charge $4000 for it. Then libraries that want copies can pay the publisher—or a middle network—for the copies they want. The physical work of producing something still has to be done, and what is most important in many ways, potential customers still need to know that the item exists. It still will need to be promoted and sold.

Much of what one reads in library literature about our future use of media implies that librarians at the point of purchase will have an option, that they can decide whether they want a hardcover, paperback or video disk “copy” of *Duhem on Medieval Cosmology: Theories of Infinity, Place, Time, Void, and the Plurality of Worlds* by Roger Ariew (University of Chicago Press, 1985), for example. I don’t think libraries always will have that option. I think the publisher at some point will have to decide in what form he can afford to make the title available and, if librarians want to purchase it, they will have to be able to make it available to users in that form.

Application of the newer technologies in libraries and publishing raises the question of free v. fee information service. Will libraries use the arrival of new forms of communication to initiate fee-for-service systems, much as there are charges now for computer searches? Will patrons pay for and keep hard copies made from video disks, rather than borrowing a book? Librarians and other information scientists and library supporters are thinking through this issue now, because if access and the serendipitous discovery of books and other media cease to be a prime factor in information use—if patrons have to know exactly which

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item they want in order to get any item efficiently—then it will be
difficult to promote to taxpayers the importance of libraries as places
where materials are collected and made available. If the United States
embraces the Public Lending Right at some future date, books will take
their place as value-added items alongside computerized services on
which a charge is placed.

Librarians, booksellers and publishers are aware of the tremendous
amount of book reading and book buying that goes on because people
happen to find an idea or title that interests them. People browse
through books and periodicals, as well as listening to radio and televi-
sion, rather than turning to a particular medium for only one kind of
information or reading experience. People come to the library for a
magazine article and go home carrying several books on unrelated
topics. Readers are serendipitous. In a recent study of library use at
Virginia Tech entitled The Landscape of Literatures, Dr. Paul Metz
suggests that:

While the present data replicate many findings from citation studies, they
indicate important differences in the extent to which specialized literatures
satisfy the needs of most disciplines. Generally, those fields which cite their
own literatures most heavily also use a heavy concentration of library
materials in their own literatures. The findings for the departments of
mathematics and geography are in accord with the citation literature in
showing, respectively, a very high and a very low degree of dependence on
endogenous literatures. Although the difference between mathematicians’
practices and those of geographers is in the same direction whether mea-
ured by citation counts or circulation records, in both cases the library
data show a greater dependence on external literatures than citation counts
reveal. This distinction is typical of most of the comparisons that could be
made. The difference between library use within specialized literatures and
citation of endogenous materials is found not only within the sciences and
social sciences, but within the humanities as well; the circulation data
show a wider use of literatures by historians and specialists in literature
than was revealed by a citation study conducted for the National Enquiry
[Scholarly Communication: The Report of the National Enquiry. Balti-
more, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979, p. 46]....

The results of the study have a number of implications for the most basic
aspects of library policy. By showing the degree to which use patterns
depend on the disciplinary affiliation of library users, the study suggests
that library use studies will be generalizable only to a limited degree and
that an understanding of use must be based on the particular characteristics
and missions of local institutions. By showing that specialists and nonspe-
cialists use materials differently, the results call for a re-examination of
fund allocation approaches to collection development. By demonstrating
the extent and nature of cross-disciplinary use and the effects of decentrali-
ization, the results call into question the scattering of library collections and
suggest lines of division which might best govern the structure of library systems. The high volume of cross-disciplinary use of library materials which the data have shown suggests that strong central libraries may be a powerful centripetal counterforce to the tendency of academic disciplines to break into non-communicating specialties. Both the findings that specialists and nonspecialists approach literatures differently and that branch libraries appear to channel reading patterns provide a basis for arguing that, when library policies are set by client groups, the result may be private virtues which are public vices. Such an argument would support the role of professional librarians as the best trustees of collections and arbiters of conflicting interests within user communities.

The data from this study tend to indicate that the use of periodicals follows disciplinary lines more than does the use of monographs, though periodicals use is by no means totally predictable. Just how closely the use of periodicals follows disciplinary lines cannot be specified in this report, but it would be important to know this....

It appears that the less closely patron and material are related, the more likely materials are to be monographic; it may well be that even if an analysis is restricted to the use of monographs, the slowness of communications among fields would be such that older materials are used disproportionately by those from more remote fields.3

Not everything we read is something that we set out to find; the wealth of choices of all kinds of media and all kinds of ideas has been the strength of the American library system. The word “book” doesn’t have to become pejorative just because librarians need to focus more attention (and funds) on acquiring automated data services. It is puzzling to hear informed, sophisticated librarians say, for instance, that accessing online information will threaten the library’s policy of access to materials on all sides of an issue.

Surely libraries won’t use one system as the sole source for all their materials, or to such an extent that the library would be harmed by biases built into systems produced by commercial entities. I should hazard a guess that never a book has been published without some bias, and that, while it sometimes doesn’t turn out that way, most commercial publishers plan for (or hope for) a profit. Why do some librarians and scholars assume that anyone will be allowed to put anything in these massive and ubiquitous databases? Surely the scholars who create the databases will arrange in some way for their distribution and protection—with limited and authorized access to their content. Why are some librarians and other scholars so quick to assume that the principles of publishing will cease to exist because data will be delivered in an automated form?

While it is true that many academic libraries today are spending a larger percent of their materials acquisition budgets on serials than on
books, the vast majority of items held by such libraries are books. Books still are the medium that draws most users to the library. Scholars of the humanities, literature, philosophy, religion, history and the other liberal arts—like readers of drama, poetry, fiction and nonfiction—will continue to seek book materials. Some readers are more interested in books published many years ago than they are in the latest research. Scholars and students in the sciences, engineering and technology are the ones seeking up-to-the-minute information, and libraries are beginning to meet that need. But the needs of one group of disciplines have heretofore never dictated library policy for all the disciplines; nor has one group heretofore continually laid claim to the lion’s share of the budget.

Until quite recently, the selection, acquiring and lending of books (and other print materials) was thought to be part of a library’s mission and service. Today, borrowing and lending books effectively sometimes is said to be less animated, duller, and more “old fashioned” than acquiring and using automated information. I think that libraries are at the heart of the learning process in this country and that they will stay there. One reason is that in most places they are the only show in town; the only place where one can find older books; and libraries offer a rich collection of serious books, classics and basic and seminal works in many, many fields from which to choose. Another is that libraries make possible our form of government. Where else is a “better read, better informed” America to turn?

Just as I don’t imagine spending the rest of my life in my living room looking at a screen and pushing buttons, I cannot imagine not leaving the living room for the library. There I will be able to find out what my information options are, and I will learn in such a way that I will respond and use the sources I need. I also expect to find people there who can help me. One finding of Chen’s study of information sources needs emphasis: People said that their primary source of information was other people. Libraries have taken giant steps away from readers’ advisory services and making educated, informed librarians, who know ideas and books, available to users. Users can be taught to handle terminals and systems, but it is harder and harder to find people, especially out on the floor in public libraries, of whom you can ask your perhaps not-fully-formed question or make a general inquiry.

Signs of Distress in the Library Profession

Coupled with the coming of the computer in libraries have been other developments that are putting pressure on the library profession.
The image of the librarian has not improved drastically across the years. Salaries have not improved in libraries at a great rate. It is difficult to recruit able students to the master's degree programs, and several universities have phased out their library schools or merged them with other programs: Rutgers University, The University of Denver, and Case Western Reserve University, and University of Minnesota, to name four. The Office of Personnel Management of the federal government has attempted to reclassify librarians out of the professional series into a clerical series—to date, unsuccessfully. Several legal cases (most notably *Merwine v. the trustees of Mississippi State University*) have prompted librarians to defend the terminal degree, the Master of Library Science/Library and Information Science/Services, as the definition of a professional, even though some of these programs are recognized as weak. Perhaps unfortunately—from a public relations point-of-view (because it sounds like vested self-interest)—the American Library Association has announced that its next Executive Director must hold a library degree from a program accredited by the ALA.

After years of presenting itself as a humane profession with one or both feet solidly in the humanities (and thus knowing and caring about books and people, interested in reading books and talking about them), the profession seems to be moving toward the systems of science and technology, again perhaps because the challenge of automation is great and because librarians themselves are seeking information, knowledge and influence.

Since blame for the nonproductive turmoil in some ALA Council meetings of late has to be placed somewhere, it all too easily gets directed at publishing. That policy-making and -monitoring body of the ALA has recently discussed and passed two empty resolutions—one on freight pass-through (which affected a few libraries briefly because clerical errors were made by wholesalers) and the other on trade book discounts. If ALA wants to write a policy statement for publishing, it should appoint a committee of librarians and publishers to try to do that. It is important to note that the ALA division that works most directly with publishers and wholesalers, the Resources and Technical Services Division, tried hard in both cases to keep these resolutions from coming to the ALA Council.

A handful of librarians seem to look down on commerce—especially the commerce indulged in by book publishers—not that of profit-making producers of furniture and other library supplies and equipment, or of databases and other automated products, including library systems. The solution to this kind of problem lies where it
always has been: in educational programs and library school courses that help librarians more efficiently to select and purchase library materials. Earlier efforts (the 1969 and 1972 preconferences to ALA conferences, for example) proved very useful and successful. The CIP (cataloging-in-publication) program was regenerated as a direct result of the 1969 meeting.

Pressures on Scholars and Scholarly Publishers

While trade book publishers in general are examining the options automation offers them, one segment of the industry is being forced by the economics of specialized markets and short-run books to embrace automation, although there still is "less here than meets the eye," as Martin Levin has so aptly said. University presses and other scholarly publishers more and more often are asking authors if their institution can provide camera-ready copy in the form of laser-printed or typeset pages. If the institution has the capacity to capture the author's keystroke to drive photocomposition equipment, the publisher saves the cost of setting the book (or reimburses the institution for its lower-than-market costs).

Incompatibility of equipment has been a major problem for scholarly presses, which often find it cheaper to re-keystroke the manuscript than to convert it to the system used by the commercial photocompositor. If the press can accept the tape or disk, then either the editor has to make changes on that record or, more usually, the edited hard-copy manuscript is returned to the author, who makes the changes in the automated record. It is then the author's responsibility, too, to assume the publisher's responsibility for final proofreading and checking. While automated systems save money in some cases (which help to keep the prices of books down), faculty are keenly aware of the amount of time they are spending doing tasks formerly thought to be the publishers'.

Scholarly books live in that category of serious works that great numbers of people don't buy, and they are the kind of book in greatest jeopardy. Lola Szladits, curator of the Berg Collection of English and American Literature of The New York Public Library, said it well in the Winter 1983 issue of Daedalus:

Today, it is possibly true that the need for and interest in the humanities are on the wane. It cannot be quantified, but it is visible both in the quality and quantity of readers and their work. Fields tend to become narrower, restricted, as some studies are, to major authors or major trends. There is a marked tendency to turn out whatever work is
required in the fastest possible time. An old-fashioned humanist has trouble understanding research today: instant answers to quick questions. Research—and it cannot be stressed sufficiently—is not identical with information, and in its long-term duration, includes contemplation and articulation.6

Libraries have been a primary market for scholarly books, especially academic and special libraries. Technically, it will be possible for a university library to order a copy of a title to be copied from the publisher’s video disk when a scholar requests it, but a great many of these serious books are meant to be read in toto. Many are not compilations of data to be consulted one section at a time, but cogent, developed, documented arguments that need to be followed from beginning to end. In short, the same principle that motivates people to read any work of fiction or nonfiction motivates them to read scholarly works. We cannot assume that because scholars use academic libraries, they are going to abandon pursuit of knowledge in books.

For library service, the special power of the computer, of course, is that it can scan vast quantities of machine-readable text or data to locate specific items quickly. The computer’s major use will be as a locator or indexer of existing knowledge, wherever it is found. Once a researcher knows that what he seeks can be found in a particular book, he will want to read that book. Again, I am speaking of scholars working in the humanities and social sciences; those in engineering and the hard sciences seek more discrete information, which they often find in databases and journal articles.

The gatekeeping function of the publisher is essential to scholars, especially younger scholars. Should the day come when any research could be made available in any system simply because the author/creator put it in, scholars would lose the power of the referee. Most promotion-and-tenure committees insist on evidence of publication in vetted or refereed journals or in books from recognized scholarly publishers.

If academic libraries continue to cut back on their purchase of specialized scholarly books, if they begin to define the worth or value of an idea in terms of the number of times someone has sought access to it (rather than its importance in a total collection on a particular topic—which is what academic librarians have been good at judging), one could imagine the day when every university of any size would have its own “press,” if only to handle requests for hard copies of materials.

In announcing the establishment of a new Office of Scholarly Communication and Technology, John William Ward, president of the
American Council of Learned Societies, said: "The new technology is radically changing the environment in which scholars do their work. Without the participation of scholars, the system will evolve according to administrative, financial and technical imperatives. The great danger is we will end with a system of scholarly communication which will be technically viable, but not intellectually desirable." This new office will:

1. monitor change and disseminate information about important changes in the system of scholarly communication;
2. create closer relationships between major actors in the system (such as research libraries, learned journals, publishers, academic administrators, and corporate firms in the computer industry);
3. initiate studies on how well the system of scholarly communication is working; and
4. explore how technological change affects the way scholars think about their work, not simply how they do their work.7

The director is Dr. Herbert C. Morton, former head of the publications program at the Brookings Institution and Resources for the Future, who contributed to the National Enquiry.

Another articulate spokesman for the state of university press publishing today is J.G. Goellner, director of the Johns Hopkins University Press. In 1978 Jack Goellner made the following statement about financial support for university presses:

University press publishing is subsidized publishing, let there be no doubt about that. Even those few presses that receive no operating subsidies from their parent universities depend heavily on title subsidies to support the publication of individual books. It is simply not possible to publish the kinds of books that university presses exist to publish without financial assistance....Many of the best, more important, most enduring scholarly books never sell enough copies to pay for their publication. The products of even the finest scholarship are not always snapped up eagerly in the marketplace....If somehow all financial support for university presses stopped totally tomorrow, most university presses would cease to exist, at least as we know them now, in short order—and the world of scholarship, higher education, and American culture would be much the poorer.8

Librarians and other educators, publishers and other vendors of information seem to be witnessing a fair amount of slippage currently of tasks, functions and responsibilities among their fields. Some publishers seem inclined to tell educators and librarians how to do their business, and some librarians and information scientists seem to be
interested in undertaking responsibilities traditionally thought of as belonging to the publisher. Lola Szladits describes one aspect of this situation: “What is missing from all discussions is a fact never questioned in the past few centuries—that we are masters of our future, not victims of machines nor the circumstances they may have created. Librarians can—and ought—to control their own computer programs, lest they sell out to businesses that would impose theirs.”

The Shared Responsibilities of the Book Community

Having attempted to outline some of the challenges faced by publishers and librarians in the next decade, I wish to identify a few areas in which we have had and continue to have shared responsibilities. Librarians, other educators and publishers alike decry the fact that 27 million adults are functionally illiterate: these adults are unable to read simple instructions or to complete a simple job application. Another 45 million are only marginally literate, and each year the total number of illiterates grows by 2.25 million persons. Various surveys—the Book Industry Study Group 1983 survey, for instance—show that just under one-half of the adults in this country have read a book in the past year. But if half of the other half cannot read well enough to scan the evening newspaper, it is doubtful that they will make heavy use of libraries, even if talking computers become more available. One still needs to read the material being identified, as well as instructions for accessing it, whether the words are on paper or on a screen. Futurists who dismiss the literacy problem with a wave of the hand overlook many relevant facts, including the cost of serving an illiterate population.

Another area in which publishers and librarians have jointly done good and effective work in the past is what is called, for lack of a better term, “reading development” or “reading promotion.” What is meant is projects, campaigns and other efforts to bring more people to reading as a source of information, inspiration, ideas. Not far down this trail one encounters some basic problems, one of which is that in working with librarians one veers soon into the area of library programming to stimulate reading, which is considered by some people to be an area publishers do not know much about. At the Association of American Publishers (AAP), we called it “reading development” when we seized every opportunity to mortise the habit of buying, borrowing and reading books into every receptive organization, individual or project that came our way. The book community needs a creative group to continue that kind of work. Conferences, research projects about book publish-
Step One: Reaffirm the Importance of Reading

First, the book community needs to compile and analyze the evidence it has about the importance of reading and the impact it has on people’s lives. Much reading research is carried out in structured school situations by educators who are primarily concerned with how reading is taught, rather than with the development of lifetime reading habits. Theoretically, every citizen of this country is taught to read when he passes through the public schools. But the instruction doesn’t stick in many cases—60 million of them, it would seem. That’s a lot of people to “miss.” The major question is: What in the instructional process, or what in the followup pattern of access to reading materials, inhibits the ability to develop an enthusiasm for reading? Radio, then television, and now the computer have all been hailed as death-knells for books and reading, but these communication formats appear to stimulate reading. Readers who watch television often return to books to find more intellectually challenging, demanding ideas. We are not drowning in PBS (Public Broadcasting System) programs; we are drowning in the mundane, to which “tough,” serious books are an antidote.

Mention of such books reminds me of a scholar who just turned ninety-four. She is in reasonable health in a retirement home to which she moved only last year. One of her major activities is reading (after ten years of making do with talking books, she decided to risk cataract surgery so she could read what she wanted to read). I asked her not long ago to what she attributed the fact that her mental capacities were not deteriorated, to which she replied: “I always am reading at least one very tough book.” Perhaps challenge, not “entertainment,” is the way to keep people sixty-five and over reading.

Step Two: Forsake the Either/Or Fallacy

Present debate about the advantages of the newer media and technologies are reminiscent of some of the early debates about the value of mass-market paperbacks. Was Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man worth less in the softcover than the hardcover edition? Is A Distant Mirror copied on paper from a video disk more satisfying to a library patron than the current print edition? While disks may solve major
problems of space in libraries, if Mrs. Tuchman's book is reproduced verbatim on sheets of paper, is not the content of the same value (legibility, convenience for the reader, aesthetic pleasure aside)?

Lewis Branscomb's essay on "Video Disc Technology and the Book" in *Books, Libraries, and Electronics* opens the readers' eyes to the possibility of vastly increased indexing and access to materials, interactive media, and the combination of formats. It is about the last of these I wish to comment. If text is to be "illustrated" with audiovisual complements, who will do the choosing? It seems essential that the same creative mind that produced the text of *A Distant Mirror*, for instance, that chose the ideas and the words to carry them, should also choose the music, art and maps that seem to her faithfully to extend her meaning. People who speak of reading as a "passive activity" are not, I suspect, serious readers. Perhaps this comment reveals a basic problem: one cannot see the mind work (unless one is a medical researcher conducting tests). Somehow the computer seems to be the mind in action because it can go through some of the limited, first steps of information processing. But it is not; it is a machine. My dishwasher washing my dishes does not have the same "thoughts" or sensations that I would have doing those same dishes.

At the April 1984 meeting of the Center for the Book advisory board, Helen H. Lyman, former professor of Library Science at the University of Wisconsin and a literacy expert, made the following statement about the impact of mathematics and the computer on our use of language:

A strong divisive trend has been the separation of persons who use the language of mathematics from those who do not. A seeming correlate of this development has been the attempt to transfer to social and humanistic fields a seemingly scientific approach based on mathematics. More often than not this approach appears to result in a pseudo-scientific research and language rather than a verbal structure. A professional language (jargon) further obscures understanding outside of an informed elite. The use of words—the verbal aspects of the culture—has diminished and corrupted the language. A contributing factor has been the demands of a mass culture and mass communication. The dependence on words has lessened while audio and visual objects replace language. In writing, a similar simplicity has developed with limited vocabulary and simplistic sentences. Words become meaningless, lack precision, and euphemisms, acronyms, pseudo-false meanings—even common uses of syntax—are misleading. Politicians, scientists, media communications—yes, educators and librarians—misuse ordinary terms.\(^{10}\)

In the September 1984 issue of *Scientific American*, Terry Winograd, associate professor of Computer Science and Linguistics at Stan-
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ford University, shows why "no existing software deals with meaning over a significant subset of English." He cites ambiguities of various kinds as the reason: lexical, structural, semantic, and pragmatic. These, coupled with problems of metaphor and poetic meaning, "make it impossible at present—and conceivably forever—to design computer programs that come close to full mimicry of human language understanding....Hopes for a 'voice typewriter' that types text from dictation are just as dim as hopes for high-quality machine translation and language-understanding." Dr. Winograd's findings suggest that computer translation of foreign-language materials and low-cost voice inputting of data are not in our immediate future.

While the computer does open many options for publishers and librarians, they should not get caught up in the either/or battle. For dozens of reasons, totally electronic libraries are not going to exist any day now. Neither are totally automated publishers. While in theory the technology exists to do many more jobs in libraries than are currently automated, in practice, in economic terms, libraries cannot put theory into practice. The book community has an important obligation to strengthen library use by promoting the availability of ideas in a wealth of kinds of materials and formats. Since books are what most people come to libraries to find, and since "book publishers have managed to maintain a degree of social responsibility thus far unmatched by any of the new electronic media," we should build on the strength of the past. By effectively promoting books and reading, all the concerned parties can promote libraries, information and knowledge. We need to use a familiar, beloved medium to pave the way for all the rest. Now how can we do that?

Elements of a Successful Reading Campaign

The Attack on Illiteracy

It is difficult to find a group in the book/reading/library community which is not concerned about basic literacy; it is equally difficult to raise modest sums in some small towns and rural areas, for instance, to support local Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) and related efforts to teach adults to read. The Center for the Book report on the book in the future is a report to Congress and is expected to recommend that Congress help to focus attention on the adult literacy problem and help resolve it, in part with dollars.

Congress should adopt this recommendation and create a literacy program at the national level; which could begin by coordinating the
various local programs and funneling to them a portion of the modest sums needed to keep them going each year (our local LVA in Blacksburg, Virginia needed the magnificent total of $1700 for one year—and almost died of malnutrition). Regional, state and local agencies and units of involved groups—including libraries—can work together to assess the need for literacy training in their areas and to allocate appropriate responsibilities to each group so that effective programs are offered to adult illiterates and new literates, and so that the programs are well promoted and supported.

Libraries need not wait for talking computers to reach out to the illiterate and newly literate. Selected collections of materials can be made available; those who cannot read at all can use tapes, films and filmstrips and illustrated books. Past efforts to convince publishers of trade books that they should have limited vocabulary/high interest manuscripts written and published for the new adult reader have not been successful because it has been impossible to describe the locus and size of the market to publishers. It is impossible to find out which agencies currently are buying such materials, or would buy more if they existed. Should the federal government launch and fund an adult literacy program, publishers could anticipate a market and some would publish for it.

Sad to report, a proposal from the Association of American Publishers that President Reagan establish a "Business Committee for Literacy" went unheeded, so no publisher support was generated through the trade association. A year later, Harold McGraw, former president of McGraw-Hill, and several colleagues, including Dan Lacy, established the Business Council for Effective Literacy, which will maintain a small professional staff to interact with adult literacy groups in the field and with the corporate community. It will regularly assess literacy activities and needs and be of help to corporations in more effectively targeting their funds and taking part in national, state and local literacy planning. The Business Council for Effective Literacy will issue research reports, literacy and corporate program profiles, topical pamphlets, and other publications for business and industry. It will provide professional advice and technical assistance and sponsor meetings and seminars. As a relatively small operating foundation, the council will focus on facilitating corporate funding and involvement rather than making large or frequent grants itself. The council hopes to become involved in the reading and writing problems of children in due course, but its immediate and central priority is adult functional illiteracy. The council's seven primary objectives are:
1. Attract corporate financial support to strengthen and expand existing programs of tutor training and tutoring.
2. Encourage corporate support for the development of new approaches to tutoring and tutor training.
3. Encourage the business community to become involved in planning and policy-making.
4. Help advance research on adult literacy.
5. Develop and disseminate general information.
6. Increase general public awareness and understanding about the scale and nature of the illiteracy problem.
7. Foster improved communication.

With ten other related organizations, ALA has established the Coalition for Literacy, which is raising funds for a broad campaign approved by the Advertising Council of America. Some of this support will be provided by the Business Council for Effective Literacy. Launched December 12, 1984, the campaign's goal is to attack the literacy problem on the national level by: (1) recruiting volunteers for existing local literacy programs, and (2) appealing to the business community to make its members aware of the nation's literacy problems and of their stake in helping to reach and teach adult illiterates. An 800 number (1-800-228-8813) has been established to put potential students and tutors in touch with appropriate local programs. By participating in the Coalition for Literacy, the American Library Association has helped local libraries to achieve a leadership role in their communities.

**The Purpose and Structure of a National Campaign**

The time is right for the major book, reading and library groups to mount a clearly articulated national campaign to promote books and reading. This effort should be guided by a board or council on which all the major groups are represented. Its purpose should be to inform the public about the importance of and pleasures in books and reading. Its staff should be drawn from the fields of public information (PI)* and advertising, and it should be housed in its own quarters and should spend funds raised for its use alone.

One of the problems in the book community is that so many groups exist to which book and library people can belong and which they can support. Not many are adequately staffed and funded, and almost none

*The terms "public information," "public relations," "promotion," and "publicity" are used interchangeably to mean the same thing: efforts to inform the public.*
has the wide dissemination (outside libraries) of public information about books and reading as its primary mission.

It is interesting that, at the end of the line for the White House Conference on Library and Information Services (1979), at the conclusion of the LC meeting on the Book in the Future (1984), and at the close of many articles and books on aspects of publishing and librarianship, the final recommendation is that the "thing we truly need" is a public information campaign. In one way, public information becomes an "out," an easy solution to difficult problems. It is assumed to be the one thing everyone understands, everyone is equipped to critique, and everyone can do with little thought, planning or research. None of these assumptions is correct. Perhaps discussions—oral and written—conclude that public information is the answer because, having talked through divisive problems, the group wants to feel that it has found common ground and consensus in one area at least. If the "doing" of a PI program is the only activity about which the group can agree, it is unlikely that an effective PI program will be generated. People mean such different things when they use the terms "public information," "public relations," and "promotion" that one needs to work hard to make oneself clear.

National/Regional/State Articulation of Public Information Goals and Programs

At the same time the committee and staff are planning for a national reading promotion effort, regional, state and local units of the participating organizations should be determining (1) how they can contribute ideas—content—to the national campaign, and (2) how they can develop an appropriate vehicle within their organizations and with their constituents to accomplish the national goals and goals of their own which relate to the larger campaign.

Using an exemplary project that I know well may reveal how these several levels of involvement can work together: the Books That Made the Difference project of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. Phase one was conducted jointly with the College of Arts and Sciences at Virginia Tech. That phase was comprised of interviews with almost 1400 Americans, who were asked two questions: What book made the greatest difference in your life? and What was that difference? Two writer/scholars, Patricia Sabine and Gordon Sabine, met or talked with people in forty-four states to ask these questions. Some of the responses were taped and many subjects were photographed.

The Sabines have presented numerous audiovisual programs drawn from their materials, and just over 200 of the respondents are
included in the book about the project, *Books That Made the Difference: What People Told Us*, which was published in 1983. In addition to the first 128 pages—the interview section—which was offered gratis by the Book-of-the-Month Club to almost a million people in January 1985, the book includes a selection of statements about the importance of reading and libraries and almost forty pages of ideas for local BMAD projects.

For one year, the National Book Awards picked up the Books Make A Difference slogan, as did the American Bookseller Association, but other than individual responses to requests for help, neither the center nor Virginia Tech could undertake a public information campaign to support the concept of regional, state and local projects.

What kinds of books made a difference? All kinds—from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to *Escape From Freedom* to *How To Win Friends and Influence People* to *The Sensuous Woman* to *Wuthering Heights*. Only five books (including the Bible and dictionaries) were mentioned by more than three persons; there was a tremendous spread of reading interest. The Sabines found that: "The book is very much alive....(This) project dramatizes the fact that people need to do more than just get information; they have to be able to give it meaning for themselves and use it to make a difference for themselves. There is a hunger for books."¹³

A review of the titles selected by the 1400 subjects left one with the impression that not many classics or bestsellers strongly influenced people; that self-help books loomed large; that serious fiction did not stand out. Yet when the Sabines read and reread statements to cull the best—the most interesting, the best-said, the most thoughtful—they discovered that the effective statements were made, in general, about serious books (many in the humanities), those that have lasted, those that are still in demand and still in print.

The Books Make A Difference (BMAD) idea is endlessly flexible and tailor-made for both national and local promotion campaigns. I cite it here because it is the kind of idea that a national organization that existed to bring word about books/reading/libraries to a mass audience of readers and potential readers, library users and potential users, could have picked up and seeded right across the country. I am not suggesting that a new organization would necessarily reach back for this idea.

The Center for the Book, in fact, intended to "place" the BMAD concept with an appropriate organization, but we were unsuccessful. One reason we failed is that we encountered "turf problems." While admitting that it was a good concept—simple but exciting, interesting
but not too complicated or expensive for even the smallest library to undertake—a few groups said they could not take it up because it was not their idea, because they would not get "credit" or visibility for devising BMAD projects. We on the center's board thought we had performed a service for libraries—in a time of tight budgets, staff layoffs, and library closings—by devising a trial run to be sure our idea truly worked. Our efforts to donate an idea (which could easily have been adapted to a parent group's focus) and a good bit of preliminary work failed. Hence my earlier statement that a new agency or organization has to be adequately funded and staffed independently, which is not to say that the pattern of cooperation seen in the BMAD project should not be replicated.

How might a national program work, and why couldn't the Center for the Book and my College of Arts and Sciences launch it? Money, in a word. Only the interview portion of the project was even partially funded, so we were unable to create a national promotion to which local projects could attach themselves. What would an ideal scenario have been?

We needed to create visible promotion materials that could be distributed free or at modest cost to locales: posters, brochures, buttons, bookmarks, camera-ready art, ad mats, and "canned" releases that local librarians could adapt for their own use. We should have published a series of how-to-do-it pamphlets to get people started in planning and doing projects. One might have dealt with generating interest among the local media, working cooperatively with them, and getting the interviewer or interesting subjects on radio and television programs (especially call-in shows). Another might have suggested kinds and locations of exhibits around the community, not just in the library. A third might have shown libraries how to get major industries and groups to conduct their own in-house BMAD projects. We might have provided camera-ready art and complete ads (to which local dates and places for interviews, programs, exhibits could have been added so local projects could be easily advertised).

Perhaps the most important ingredient in such a campaign are professional promotion and program staff members who can go from place to place to help local people start projects and to assist states and regions in coordinating and promoting the results of projects. In one place, the Friends of the Library might be the project sponsor; in another it might be the Rotary Club; in a third it could be the local literacy group. Staff members need to be able to work with such groups and to help put them in touch with one another.
Professionals don't "do" BMAD projects—or National Library Week or Banned Books Week or Children's Book Week—for the sake of the event. They use such vehicles to promote books, reading and libraries. The whole point of the BMAD project is that it is a library promotion venture. Why? Because the library is the community resource where all those titles and many, many more can be found. Local interviewers could make this point, which would be reinforced if they handed out information about the library to every subject.

Two responses from librarians with whom I talked in setting up the original project made me aware of the project's potential. One was the typical reaction: "We're delighted to participate in such an upbeat, positive effort related to ideas. These are tough times in libraries. We don't have many opportunities to go to our taxpayers with a positive message." (Many librarians who made this kind of statement were watching City Hall hack their budgets to death while they contemplated bond issues and branch closings.) The other point was related: "This project gives us an opportunity to offer the media here something fresh, interesting and noncontroversial; we can give, not take."

In a BMAD campaign, while some members of the national staff were helping start state, regional and local projects, others could be interviewing "famous" subjects, and taping and photographing them. These interviews would be fed out to the states a few at a time—or grouped by areas such as sports, film, theater, music, political life, and the like—so local project directors would have a constant feed of fresh books and differences from famous people, those to whom local people would pay attention, to whom they would respond. Packaging such interviews on tape and film for distribution to radio and television stations would be effective. Broadcasters could use them as spot announcements with a message from the library, or about the local project.

There isn't space here to spell out all the administrative and working relationships that need to be developed to create an effective national network of people dedicated to the promotion of books and reading. I mean to suggest only that it can be done and that a professionally conceived and developed continuing PI effort could provide essential aid to states and locales. Many, many different agencies do effective one-shot PI programs, which are in part wasted because there is no followup, no analysis. In conducting BMAD projects, for instance, libraries could learn a great deal about what the public knows and does not know, thinks and does not think about the library itself. Projects could be one vehicle (among several) to assess user needs.
From the myriad of education and library organizations that promote libraries and library causes, one stands out—the American Library Association. Nothing I have said here should be construed as negative comment about its communications program. Indeed, the newly enlarged vision for National Library Week is based on establishing a network of concerned, involved organizations whose members also care about the contribution libraries make in our society. But the whole burden of book/reading/library promotion is not ALA's alone. The book community is larger than just teachers or just librarians or just publishers. We need most an effective mechanism to integrate the PI goals of all appropriate groups and, at least annually, to conduct a national reading promotion campaign that most groups can adopt and play off of through their units across the country. We need a catalyst, which might be called the National Reading Council.

Why don't we have such an organization? For two primary reasons:

1. Book publishers, likely beneficiaries who are proficient at promoting and selling their own titles, see the need for a general promotion effort but they appear to be unwilling to support it financially.

2. Librarians, also likely beneficiaries, are not generally proficient at PI; as libraries have spent more and more money on nonbook materials and services, many library managers, at least, have turned their backs on books and reading as promotion vehicles for the library.

In the book industry, effective directors of promotion, publicity, advertising, and sales departments usually are members of the management team who participate in major decisions about many aspects of book publishing and who usually are respected and quite well paid. In libraries, PI people generally have low visibility, are rarely members of the management team, and often do PI work in addition to other major assignments.

Readers of Publishers' Weekly and other trade journals are aware that the Association of American Publishers has cut back staff support of its projects that help people to develop lifetime reading habits. Readers of American Libraries and other library media know that there are a large number of subgroups in the library community trying to promote library causes effectively but not enjoying the success they should.

Many library administrators think library PI is what they read about: releases, social events, spot announcements for radio and television, brochures and other publications, posters, etc. That is not the case. Those items are the frosting on the cake. The thinking and planning,
the strategy and work that produce such items is public information. Because, however, the visible bits and pieces of a PI effort are what can be promoted, PI is viewed as itsy, bitsy—and confused, diffuse and consisting of minutiae. Launching an effective national campaign could help to educate and motivate those library managers who seem to need the exposure, those who don't fully appreciate the importance of quality library promotion.

If a national umbrella organization—a National Reading Council—were created, individual librarians would have to understand the need for focus on some characteristic of libraries that is also common to other cooperating groups, and that can be isolated and used to promote library service. Another reason library PI is viewed as diffuse and ineffectual is that libraries send contradictory messages to the public; one talks about its automated catalog, another promotes programs for children, and a third tries to raise money for a new branch. The image of libraries has dimmed as library promoters have tried to keep librarians inside happy, rather than sending messages that users outside can respond to.

Those who use libraries today know that all kinds of materials can be found there—print, nonprint, automated—and rejoice in that fact, especially when they find what they seek. In an attempt, however, to escape the "libraries are merely storehouses of books" notion, librarians have confused the public, which has not helped the image of librarians. Any successful PI effort finds a tool, a hook, a symbol that will work in a variety of different situations, formats, times, and places. That symbol, I think, is reading and the book. Libraries should consider returning to what has been a successful tool to promote libraries.

Using books as the promotion tool, libraries can find allies with money and enthusiasm for a national campaign. Literacy is on everyone's mind. Reading is done in many places in addition to the library, but millions of people get what they read from the library. Further, the concept of books and reading enjoys the support of numerous nonbook nonlibrary organizations; some aspect of their national program links up to books. It is books and reading that are the common denominator. If library groups solicited publisher support and treated publishers like true partners, they would respond. One doesn't hear of library furniture producers promoting furniture in general, or database producers stimulating interest in any but the ones they market. Librarians should not overlook the support they have had from publishers in the past—support they could have again.
Just as some librarians view the newer media and technologies as more important than books, so some library promoters view using radio and television to promote libraries as, somehow, more "important" than print. The result is that the quality of promotional writing about libraries has decreased in the past fifteen years.

Efforts to produce films, filmstrips, spot announcements, and slide/tape shows that don't start with a script never are successful because the cohesion, the editorial point-of-view, the thought process one wants an audience to go through is missing. Libraries may have taken a route in promoting their services which makes less of an impression on the user than does a brochure or release. For one thing, it takes longer to read something than to watch it briefly on television or listen to it on the radio; people remember more of what they read than of what they are told. Furthermore, a large percentage of Americans do their listening and viewing while they are doing something else. It is almost impossible to read something attentively and do anything else, so one's attention is more focused while reading. As W. Russell Neuman, co-director of the MIT Program on Communication Policy, has said:

To understand how media are really used in the home, consider the Least Objectionable Program Theory. Television executive Paul Klein's notion is that the average viewer does not watch a program per se, but rather watches "television." The viewer plops down in front of the set, spins the dial, examines the programs available, and selects the least objectionable. Surveys repeatedly confirm that most viewers report watching "whatever is on....."

According to the latest Nielsen data, the average viewer watches about 4.5 hours of television a day. Women over fifty-five years of age average about six hours a day. The set is on seven hours a day. Television is a tremendously successful commercial medium. The audience, on the whole, is quite happy with it. But people are not using this quintessential mass medium for information retrieval.

Television, as well as the magazines in the bathroom and the radio in the kitchen, become part of the environment of the house. They are conveniently available and part of the ambience. They are not sought out purposefully for information retrieval; they are part of the media habit. Much of the time they are used while other activities are ongoing. Viewers focus on the television only sixty-five percent of the time. Thirty-three to fifty-five percent of the time television shares their attention with other household activities. The percentages are even higher for radio. Users consume our media in a casual and passive way. Only three percent even bother to change the channel when a commercial comes on in the middle of a program.\textsuperscript{14}
Conclusion

In times of stress when people feel threatened, they naturally respond by pulling back, by doing only the essential things, by attending first to their own needs and those of others for whom they are responsible. Both publishers and librarians have lived through periods of stress in the last decade. Now is the time for these two groups to plan to work together again. Self-service is at times a necessary short-range goal, but in the book community it can quickly become counterproductive. Because the symbiotic relationship between publishers and librarians, producers and users of materials, is so strong, each group makes much more progress if it moves in concert with the other.

Maybe we should have written that book, Dan. Maybe....

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The Role of Authors

BARBARA TUCHMAN

When I was invited to contribute to this symposium, it was suggested that I address the question of the "role of authors in ensuring quality." Whether there can be such a role may be answered, of course, by a simple negative: No one, whether interested outsider or author, himself can "ensure" quality any more than we can ensure what kind of a baby a particular couple will produce.

What serious creative authors will write depends on what is in their heads, or, as they used to say in Vietnam, in their hearts and minds. "Winning hearts and minds" was the phrase used in the United States policy for motivating and energizing the forces in Saigon, an enterprise known among its participants by the acronym W.H.A.M. of WHAM. If what is wanted is a WHAM program for writers of the future, my advice would be: Don't. Writers are not that open to suggestion, as indeed the people of South Vietnam—for various reasons—were not.

What really was wanted, I imagine, was a statement on whether the conditions of publishing and marketing, in view of present trends, will discourage rather than encourage and support the writing of books of quality, or, on the contrary, will tend to debase them on a descending scale weighted to benefit the lowest common denominator of consumers. This is what seems to me to be the fear underlying the present discussion. It derives from concern that commercialism in the chain bookstores will come to exert the determining influence on what shall

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be published and what shall not, because of the chains' intervention in
telling publishers in advance what will sell. In short, the determining
factor in publishing will be that old devil, the bottom line.

Well, this is hardly new. Publishers were in business to make a
profit even when they were all Charles Scribners and John Murrays and
Alfred Knopfs and Leonard Woolfs (Woolf's Hogarth Press, I read in a
recent review, was "always in the black"). Books of enduring value were
published in those days and trash, too; and when publishers made
money from the trash, they had that much more to invest in good books
that brought their houses distinction, if not box office receipts. I do not
see why the same operation should not hold true today in spite of those
corporate monsters lurking in the background. The junk can still
finance the experiments and the best creative and scholarly work—the
worthwhile books that will stay on the shelves.

I know that the gloom-sayers are asking whether writers will still
write their best when the rewards—the big auctions and fat contracts
with advances in six figures—are offered for the easy winners, for the
thrillers about double agents foiling some villainous plot to blow up the
world, or kidnap the president, or spread sinister germs in the national
drinking water, or the horror books about a fiend stalking a small town,
or the packaged romances about forbidden love. I think true literature
will still find its way into print, for not withstanding Dr. Johnson's
dictum that, "no one but a blockhead ever wrote except for money"—a
pronouncement that may stand as the farthest from truth of any state-
ment ever to make the dictionaries of quotation. I can say as one
blockhead to my fellows that most writers write for the love of writing,
because they have a story to tell or because they have something they
want to express, and because they want to fashion their prose into a
work of art, just as a sculptor wants to carve a thing of beauty from a
block of marble. That wish, that desire, cannot be eradicated from the
born man of letters any more than you could take the wish to go fishing
out of Izaak Walton, or make an athlete stop running, or skiing, or
swimming, or whatever it is that makes him go.

I do not think the chain stores are necessarily a menace. If these
stores sell more books and reach more book readers and book buyers
than were reached before, that is to the good even if the product is junk
because of the act of reading and the pleasure it gives will induce the
reader to move onto something better.

The specter of electronics is the second fear—the worry that elec-
tronic devices will somehow replace the book—which I suspect is even
less of a menace than the bookstore chains. The people who carry on
about this fearful portent foresee it sweeping the book into the dust pile, leaving readers gazing in dulled passivity at lines of little green angular letters flickering on a screen. The worriers have not considered, I believe, the factor of consumer resistance. RCA Corporation, according to a report in The New York Times of 4 April 1984 has stopped manufacturing its video disk players, three years after introducing them as the product that "would revolutionize home entertainment." But the video disk revolution failed to materialize. It failed, reports The New York Times, "to generate consumer enthusiasm." Let every book lover take heart at these happy words. I see the book of the future rising in serene triumph, like a many-colored phoenix, over a rust heap of old disks and tapes discarded in that mysterious nonappearance of "customer enthusiasm."

Deterioration in the quality of books, or its reverse, will depend, not on the externals of commercialism and electronics, but on the values of our society. If values degenerate further toward the point where everything offered to the public in the field of arts and letters and other cultural matters is the cheapest product that the seller thinks can make the lowest and broadest appeal, then I suppose writing, or at least publishing, will reflect the degeneration.

As examples, I can point to one in print and one on the air waves that illustrate the worst taste that I could imagine being put before the public. One is a series of joke books which proudly assert their tastelessness and in which pornography, scatology, anti-Semitic, antifemale, anti-every-minority jokes covered page after page in a repulsive parade. I called the president of the publishing company responsible for one of these books to ask how come he was in this galère and to express dismay. His reply came down once again to profit and commerce. After the first of the books appeared and the market responded with enthusiasm, it was clear, he told me, that the other firms would rush in to copy the product and share the sales; and if he did not enter the competition, others would; and they would reap the advantage. In other words, his own standards did not operate at all—and he is otherwise a fine, respectable man of active social conscience—but only the bottom line.

The other example was the interview with former president Nixon on "Sixty Minutes" on Sunday, 8 April 1984. I am certainly no partisan of Richard Nixon, but I thought the questions about his private and public feelings concerning his wife and his feelings about Watergate were so offensive that I felt embarrassed for him, and wondered that he did not throw a pitcher of water in the questioners' faces. But here, too, I suppose revenue was the key. The network, it was said, had paid him
some fabulous sum in six figures, which presumably made the nastiness bearable. No fact of interest—political or psychological—was turned up. The interviewers brought out nothing new that might have justified the miserable exhibition and apparently none of them objected to what they were doing. It was high level show biz and the public could be expected to wallow in it with morbid delight. Whether the public did or did not, I have no idea. The public, Alexander Hamilton said, “is an ass” (or “a great beast”—or words to that effect) and yet it can be also discriminating. It responds to good books when they appear, as it did, if I may be immodest, to *A Distant Mirror*.\(^1\) A book about an unknown character laid in the fourteenth century sold over half a million copies in hard cover—it was wild and astonishing. My publisher replying to my puzzlement said, “you must remember that among book buyers there are many publics.” This is the fact and that is what saves us and will continue to save at least a proportion of books and writers and readers for work of enduring quality.

**Reference**

Editing: Inside the Enigma

WILLIAM B. GOODMAN

In Memory of Margaret Marshall

When candid about what they do, trade publishers and editors are gloomy about their business, but such gloom is usually contradicted by their irrepressible enthusiasm for their books. “Oxymorons all, every one of them,” a wag I know would have it, but this is said not so much in criticism as in bemused appreciation. Why? Because the trade books—fiction and nonfiction—that can be taken seriously as literature and necessary discourse in a democratic society too often are weak to hopeless investments for their publishers in the short run (where their business is done) however widely circulated the same books may become when they no longer are vendible articles of trade.

Under the present copyright law, the lifetime of the author plus fifty years defines the duration of an author’s property right in his texts, an improvement made in 1976. But please note, this good fact has nothing to do with whether those texts as matters of business are worth a publisher’s while to keep in print. This is neutral prudential fact and brings us to the central enigma and mystery of our culture for writers, readers and publishers. Here, from Elizabeth Sifton, director of Elizabeth Sifton Books at Viking/Penguin, is a chastened gloss of that enigma: “There is a natural limit on the readership for [new] serious

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fiction, poetry and nonfiction in America that ranges, I would say, between 500 and 5000 people—roughly a hundred times the number of the publisher's and the author's immediate friends (Sifton's Law)."1 Few trade publishers would agree with Sifton in public but all in the calculations they must make when acquiring manuscripts for publication obey Sifton's Law as best they can. Such obedience, by anticipating probable total hardback sales and such subsidiary rights income as might conceivably occur through possible sale to mass or trade paperback houses, has made the publication of first novels, poetry and general intellectual nonfiction more and more difficult to sustain. If Sifton is right, and I think she is, the cultural consequences are grave indeed for what the future can be expected to support as a matter of normal expectation.

What is involved here is what Sifton's numbers mean in what it will cost writers to live and in what the costs of publishing will become for what the trade pejoratively if ruefully calls "the literary novel" to which should be added the analogous nonfiction book or volume of poetry—books, in short that alert general readers—and their librarians—would buy when they surface, however briefly, in reviews and bookshops. If the fate of such work is more imperiled today than it was, say in 1945, it is because Sifton's numbers have not changed. There has been no increase there but everything in the cost of publishing books has increased heavily. This means so sharp a rise in the break-even point of such books that sales under Sifton's law almost always fall below the costs of their first printings. And that sales outcome means no second printings and fairly rapid remaindering of remaining stock.

This gloomy scenario is not always the case. I can think of three exceptions in my recent experience (all of which received front page reviews in the Sunday New York Times Book Review)—Aharon Appelfeld's short novel, Badenheim 1939; Benedict Kiely's short fiction collection, The State of Ireland; and Richard Rodriguez's autobiographical book, Hunger of Memory—exceptions in that each one turned a modest profit for their authors and publishers, but such exceptions must not be taken as the general rule. Their hardback sale per title exceeded the upper limit of Sifton's Law but did not triple it. Such a sales record, it needs be said, would not impress the embattled marketing managers of any of the major houses very much. They would think it respectable perhaps but not too much more than make-weights on lists that had better have a boomer or two on them per season.

Think, if you will, of our national population. There are 230 million Americans in 1984, most of them literate in the sense the term
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has in the law. An astonishing number of the population are college graduates, many of whom were "majors" in one or another of the humanities, history, or the social sciences. Each year we graduate far more than 5000 bachelors of art—some states alone exceed that modest number—but the top limit in Sifton's Law remains remarkably stable. If you consider the meaning of that fact in the lives of writers and publishers much of the constrictive nature of the contemporary literary situation will become clear. The general phenomenon is not new. For most books that have lasted, from Samuel Johnson's generation to William Faulkner's, the situation has been essentially the same. The key word in the last sentence is essentially. The constriction in my working lifetime has changed the essential margins in trade publishing that as near ago as the late 1950s made it practical publishing for a trade editor to argue in his house that this or that good first novel or first nonfiction book was of sufficient artistic or intellectual power to command the kind of "word-of-mouth" and reviewing that would produce at a minimum a sufficient sale to pay for its costs of publication, even, "with the right breaks," to exceed that break-even number and move into actual if mild profit. This is important to understand because it made it possible to support careers, to support new writers, and many experienced ones, over many books and thus sustain their continued development. As important, it allowed time for readers to catch up with them, and, in due course, for a genuinely profitable book to occur to reward the publisher's confident patience.

With the continually rising costs of publishing (composition plus printing paper, binding, and house overheads) and with the persistent force of Sifton's Law, editors and the writers they would support now face a situation so reduced or constricted that it appears to be more than a difference in degree. The editorial consequences are more and more in the direction of books that are safe commercially and books moreover, that are worth great sums. The decision to publish may be based on the submission of brief proposals because their authors—Carl Sagan is a recent example—have written best-sellers or are celebrities or both. Writers, in other words, whose "product" is "name brand," the sort of merchandise that competent marketing and promotion managers can move out in literal car load lots. It is naïf and idle to complain about this. The first rule in publishing is to stay in business and best-sellers are part of the economic pattern or health of any general trade house that hopes to last. What's new is that the economics of trade publishing today more and more limit lists to writers whose marketability is either proven or bankably high enough—Woodward on Belushi?—to be
worth investment. The consequence of such a pronounced drift to market safety in major house after major house is that it is easier for an editor to get a five- or even a "six-figure advance" against royalties for—let me invent something—say, James Michener's to-be-written historical novel tentatively entitled *Central America* than to free up a high four-figure or low five-figure advance for a life and times of, say, Archibald MacLeish, a book well worth doing for a respectable number of literary, social cum political/historical reasons.

James Michener, a perfectly decent man, is not to be blamed for this development. An old publishing hand, Michener, ever the survivor, has matched his talent to his times and succeeded famously. No one begrudges him that earned success. In a society more and more ahistorical, he has become too much the guardian of our national memory. What is to be noticed most here about his success, however, is that it symbolizes the drift to publishing lists that no longer are built as deliberate mixes of different levels or qualities of work—because good books of all kinds arguably would sell well enough book-by-book to keep the accounting department happy (or at least quiet)—but more and more are mixes of presumed probable best-sellers and some other books, many of which are given indifferent marketing and promotional support.

Some in my trade will say I exaggerate and will point to the uniform number of trade books—that famous 40,000—published every year. If the annual number of published trade books has not changed, and if all are not best-sellers, which manifestly they are not, where is the constriction, where is the drift to lists top heavy with supposed best-sellers? This kind of riposte puts us in the never-never land of debating points. The 40,000 figure for the annual number of new trade books published in the United States is a myth as Samuel S. Vaughan, editor-in-chief of Doubleday, has made plain in a fine essay, "The Community of the Book."2 The terms of trade publishing are shrinking, as shrink they must, in response to what can be sold to book shops, book shop chains, libraries with reduced budgets, book clubs, select reprinters, and publishers abroad for some titles. The anguish some feel over this shrinking, while genuine, cannot be overcome by either accusations of pandering to low taste or grand histrionics in defense of presumed "high culture." If you believe as I do that literature is freest and best when it can support itself, and if literature means to you those books increasingly unprofitable to publishers who once took pleasure and profit in publishing them, then we are ready to take a speculative look at the future of good books and guess at some of what may be in store for
readers, writers, editors, and publishers. It's not Oceania that's coming. Not that at all, though ersatz Orwell will not soon die, but the literary and publishing situation that surrounds us now with some shift and change. Here are some speculative paragraphs that attempt to smell out pieces of the future.

The constriction of the lists of major trade houses where best-sellers dominate and the voodoo economics they imply will continue. There is a best-seller syndrome. Continuance of this development means that the distinctive qualitative difference between publishers many adepts now claim to see will become more and more difficult to discern. The emperors are disrobing.

The entry of small, new, trade publishers into the field outside the major publishing centers of New York and Boston, modeled perhaps on lists like those of Godine in Massachusetts and North Point in California, will continue. Why more publishers? Two reasons: the first and oldest is the sheer fascination publishing books has had since it became a practical business in the late eighteenth century when modern road networks and later improved paper manufacture made it possible to print books cheaply and distribute them widely. Second, there will be an eagerness among the new and surviving small houses to take advantage of the opportunity created by the best-seller system, a system that shuts out books intrinsically worth publishing, and which if well-published, might return and perhaps exceed what it costs to produce them.

The probable continued force of Sifton's Law cannot be avoided. It means that the actual prosperity for a book begins well past its outer limit. Logic alone would dictate, then, that many of the kinds of books given the most respectful attention in reviews will gradually disappear. The logic of practical economics, however, has never ruled publishing. Experience, like history, does not always repeat itself in predictable ways. Good books now and then have violated Sifton's Law. Editors and publishers live for such violations. No matter how often they have been stung by respectable books they have had to remainder, they stay persuaded by an animal faith that before the end of the current week, month, or year, a 1984, a World of Our Fathers, or a Doctor Zhivago will turn up through a contact, be invented in-house, come in through an agent convinced that only one house will be able to maximize the unknown script's potential, or —least likely of all—arrive unsolicited or unsponsored in the mail among the too many mute offerings some few of them persist in reading from writers of whom they've never heard.

It's quite touching when you think about it, this steady faith that writing worth investment somehow will always be there. So using
Sifton's Law to reject the merely respectable and always holding themselves ready for something—what is it? where is it?—that has not yet found them, publishers will huddle with their editors and will to outguess the culture. In doing so, they will scout the categories that have always included their most reliable books. These break down into familiar genres: biography, literary and not-so-literary fiction, public affairs, history, detective fiction. What do they look like now for the future? All will continue, of course, but the interesting question is: On what terms? All crystal balls have eccentric weathers. One man's predictions are another's giggle. Still, there's some point in trying to guess what the future may do to categories we think we understand.

In biography, there are some fascinating problems. If you take the gloomiest view and say that reading that is wide and deep is shrinking so radically that Sifton's Law is ratified in every book shop in the land every day—and returns to publishers in 1984 would support such gloom—that ratification will have to mean that serious biography—W. Jackson Bate's Samuel Johnson, say, or Richard Ellmann's James Joyce—will lack support from readers and so, inevitably, support among publishers. Both the Bate and Ellmann books are deliberately addressed to conspicuously literate general readers. Acknowledged modern masterpieces, they were published with considerable confidence and both succeeded. But if serious reading continues to shrink, what is the future of such biography? At a minimum, it will mean trade publishers will support less of it and university presses will have more of it to consider and publish—the result, a loss to general readership. University press books are usually written on different principles than trade books, and, most important, university press books are not designed or discounted to facilitate wide general distribution. It will mean, too, thin advances for biography from trade publishers and a deepening of the trend toward academic authorship for biography. Is this bad? Not necessarily, but it is hardly a sign of cultural health if only academic careers can sustain writers lives in which serious biography is a central activity.

There are a number of biographical books that should see print before the 1980s are out. Two examples are David Donald's biography of Thomas Wolfe and R.W.B. Lewis's The Jameses: A Family Narrative. The authors, thoroughly experienced and distinguished biographers, both work in academic settings designed to sustain them. And both, like Bate and Ellmann, were trained in the last generation in which it was possible to assume that the modern culture that supplanted the Victorian would not unravel into something that would make their culture
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obsolete. Thus Donald's and Lewis's assumption that they have a dependable number of general readers out there to summon to their subjects. They are probably not wrong. The question is whether Sifton's Law will diminish their reach. The quality of what they will write is hardly in doubt. As academics, of course, they are not much at risk. A biographer who works free lance—Robert Caro is a good example—runs greater risks than Donald and Lewis. Justin Kaplan's bet for the late 1980s, a biography of Charles Chaplin, is underway. Its chances against Sifton's Law are pretty good—any inventive editor would have to say so—and therefore worth decent support. The question for biography in the 1980s—and with these examples of books under composition we are dealing with biography at our highest levels—is how far beyond Sifton's Law will they go. Not as far as they would have gone in the late 1950s, grim marketing managers I know would claim. Such men curse Sifton's Law, and by all too often treating it as prophecy, some injured writers and editors claim, insure sales failures for particular books.

Such prophetic considerations, however, do not usually engage writers before they commit themselves to new work. The subject can sometimes be all. Given substantial recent work from literary women on the terms with which women have had to lead their lives in the past, it is more than merely probable that today's writers will produce a number of revisionary biographies before the 1980s end. It is hard to imagine a more likely or more valuable figure for such biographical examination than George Eliot. Gordon Haight's biography in 1968, splendid as it is, seems less modern than it should now, and one itches to see what an Eliot biography would be like from writers as different as, say, Susan Gubar and Phyllis Rose.

The late 1980s should see (but probably will not) a biography of T.S. Eliot authorized by his widow. We may, however, see her edition of his letters, long rumored ready. Valerie Eliot has a torturing problem. Her husband forbade a biography, but he did not destroy his papers. Moreover, he was too much the publisher and literary man to believe that a biography could be stopped. Sonia Orwell had the same problem and solved it by authorizing Bernard Crick's biography without retaining right of approval of Crick's manuscript, an understanding that is the sine qua non of truly creditable biography. I don't know how or whether Mrs. Eliot will solve the problem her husband left her. She hardly needs new advice, there's been so much offered on every side. Since so much of imperative value depends on her cooperation, I do hope she will be able to bring herself to authorize a biography. I do not
have a nominee whose name would be new to her, but I do believe whoever is chosen should be an American. Eliot, more even than Henry James, had the most successful American career in English letters that any writer has had. He worked in an English setting, but English as he seemed to appear, he was undeniably American. It is always tricky when an Englishman writes an American’s biography and vice versa. Tricky but not impossible. Small mistakes often undercut large analytic undertakings in such books. In Eliot’s case it is supremely important that the biographer’s bones know what it must have meant to be a boy in an exiled New England family in Saint Louis, Missouri, and what it meant for such a child to recover his Boston heritage, absorb Harvard and its native anglophilia, and finally transplant himself to London, mixing, as it were, Thames and Mississippi. So Eliot’s biographer should start as he did from an American education—one that would have to extend beyond academic degrees to a considerable experience of England. The biography of Eliot published by the English writer Peter Ackroyd in 1984, and which I did not see until after this piece was written, is a case in point. It is as good and as thorough a book as an Englishman could write now under the rules imposed by the Eliot Estate and Mrs. Eliot’s influence on the survivors of the poet’s milieu—and it is weak in precisely those areas where what is American in Eliot should by authoritatively glossed.

Those allergic to television assure us that it will continue to discourage and depress reading. It is important to understand that there is little or no evidence for this claim. Readers, we are told, read as much as they did before television. Nonbook readers, of course, do not read books or much else; moreover, “on the average, book readers spend as much time watching television as do nonbook readers.” If television was as negative a force where reading is concerned as is claimed, you would think it would have killed the kind of best-seller pitched to its low-average level, the kind of mental junk food for which Judith Krantz and Harold Robbins have become famous. This has not happened yet and probably will not. The signs are not particularly encouraging, moreover, for what will happen for better books on television in the 1980s. Prime time is out. The conventional wisdom of commercial television in the United States, a wisdom that includes the conviction that anything that deals with any of the arts on or near their own terms is audience destroying, works heavily against heads however adroitly placed that would talk well about books. Not so in the United Kingdom where commercial television as part of its negotiated parliamentary price for being must produce prime time arts programming that includes
books. There is no American equivalent of the popular ITV South Bank Programme, where the well-known novelist Melvyn Bragg will talk, sometimes for an hour, with writers of the quality, say, of Saul Bellow, David Mamet, Tom Stoppard, or Bernard Malamud about their work. "Bragg claims," the American editor Patricia Mulcahy (Viking/Penguin) says, 4 "that after he featured Isaac Bashevis singer on his show, over 100,000 copies of the polish writer's books left the stores the following week. It is hard to imagine Dick Cavett, [never network prime time], getting anywhere near comparable results for the many fine writers presented on his now-defunct PBS program."

The most recent American attempt to produce book programming on American television is "First Edition." It is based on an idea by the President of the Book-of-the-Month Club, Al Silverman, with John Leonard as very much its star host around whom revolve Nancy Evans, Clifton Fadiman, and one writer per show, a figure who usually has less to say than the host. 5 "First Edition" is syndicated nationally on the PBS network but never at prime time and all too often on a quite irregular schedule week to week, a fact that makes building an audience for it difficult. Its future is dim, I believe, because it misconstrues its function, which is by talking well—in literate and if possible idiosyncratic exchange between men and women soaked in books—about one writer’s new book (or whatever subject the program’s people may invent about books) provides the kind of civilized entertainment only the autonomous well-read can give each other. Until a decent books program is given a sufficient prime time test in one network time slot nationally—say six months during which ratings are taken but ignored where continuance of the program is concerned—it will not be known whether an audience “out there” can be built for it. Doubtless that audience will fall below what usually succeeds famously in such prime time national network slots. That familiar fact has always been enough to kill arts programming in regular prime time and it will continue to do so until one of the major networks reads its writ to include a mandate for a prime time chance for the sort of thing ITV and Melvin Bragg do with such success in Britain. Such a move is unlikely and so perhaps in American PBS syndication of select examples of the Bragg program.

The short story, long a publisher’s allergy, is less so today, and should continue to increase—mildly—its share of those who buy books for themselves or for libraries. But there is one limitation for short story writers that probably cannot be overcome. Fitzgerald and Hemingway, who were masters of the short story, worked in a publishing environment where many magazines—e.g., Colliers, Saturday Evening Post,
Liberty, and Esquire, to name but four—paid well and regularly for short stories. Collections of their stories, while nice, were not central to their careers, but served as acknowledgments by their publishers of their fame and marketability as novelists. A short-story collection that reprints work previously published has some value for the record but usually succumbs as a book to Sifton's Law. In any event, the world that published Hemingway's and Faulkner's stories is long gone. The contemporary short-story writer—Frederick Busch, Raymond Carver, Andre Dubus, James Ward Just, Alan McPherson, of whom you've heard, and, to pick four, Susan Dodd, Pam Durgan, Kent Nelson, and Stephanie Vaughn, of whom you may not—works in a restricted magazine milieu, more of them poorly paying quarterlies than anything else. There's still The New Yorker, Esquire, The Atlantic and Harper's with some space to fill, but the old world of the popular weeklies and the pulps, where writers like Dashiel Hammett learned their trade, has disappeared beyond the hope of resurrection. There is Playboy, high paying to be sure, but a magazine with which not every good writer, and surely no woman, can work.

What's encouraging about the short story, the American fictive form par excellence, is that writers won't give it up, and that new writers keep coming on. Such writers' economic lives are much more difficult now than they were for Hammett's and Fitzgerald's generation. Many teach in creative writing programs attached to English departments and many more pass through them as students. Some of these students later join creative writing faculties. Our experience of such enterprises is too recent for reliable judgment on their actual value to writing, but this much is clear: ambivalence about them is high. Most writers feel it's probably not good for them as writers to teach literature or writing, however good it is for their students and however good it may be as a job they can hold and still write.6

What is pleasant to report is that the book of short stories is back as a publishing staple. That overstates the case a bit. Much of the activity is reprinting of older books in paperback—more trade paperbacks than mass—or handsome hardback books like the short stories of established masters like Welty or Pritchett or Cheever—but, hold, enough predictive caution. The quality of short-story manuscripts good editors see these days is noticeably higher than it was a few years ago, and often higher than that of scripts for first novels, and there's every reason to expect this trend to continue.

In long fiction, talk of themes, styles, subjects—unless historical—is remarkably unhelpful. The novel won't pose peacefully for predic-
Novelists do what they can and must. Nonfiction books can be respectfully proposed to writers. It is common publishing practice to do so. But true fiction is something else. It is held in a creative privacy, especially when the talent is large, that cannot be broken. Here the wise editor waits till he is given something to read. The great danger in the shrinking readership for the “literary novel” is one in which repeated commercial failure for their best work turns such writers either to silence or to work they’d rather not do however well they learn to do it. And sometimes such work takes them away from books altogether. It can also induce a situation where what amounts to a species of patronage—publisher to writer—enters where heretofore straightforward professional matters of business obtained. Such favors are better left undone.

In long fiction sometimes there are itches an editor should scratch when he senses in a writer’s work a book or large subject that may not have occurred to that writer. So I muse a bit on what would happen if so solvent a novelist and fabulist of our political history as Gore Vidal were to turn his attention to the milieu that produced both presidents Roosevelt. For good writers less solvent than Vidal there are inevitable losses—books implicit in ones they have written that may never reach paper. Here, for example, I mourn the loss of the sequel to Paul Fox’s fine novel *The Western Coast* (1972), but my grief may be misplaced. The possibility of the book cannot be denied even in a society as “bibliophobic” as Gore Vidal is sure the American is.

The next decade, if present trends hold, should increase the literary and academic respectability of detective fiction. Course work in it will grow. I share Jacques Barzun’s and Carolyn Heilbrun’s mixed feelings about this development, but as K.C. Constantine’s editor, I welcome it, because Constantine, as a master of American demotic speech and of the crime situation novel, is bound to benefit from the inevitable attention. So will his few peers. But it’s bad educational practice. The culture needs readers of cultivation that is wide and deep and the education of such readers needs Shakespeare, Milton, Melville, and Balzac far more than it needs Sayers, Simenon, Sjöwall & Whalöö, et al. Undergraduates, after all, will find them anyway.

Detective fiction does not need academic support, though (as I would argue), particular books in the genre may be worthy of close literary attention. Rather, what the future of reading needs is a multiplicity of readers of a sufficient depth of experience as readers to demand good new books, and to be capable of recognizing good new books when they occur. Undergraduates need no help toward Raymond Chandler or
Robert Parker. What they must have—and this should be said to college faculties as firmly as possible—are comprehensive liberal educations, educations that do not neglect scientific literacy, educations they cannot shirk—if, that is, if American books worthy to stand beside Thoreau, Melville, Howells, Wharton, Faulkner, Wallace Stevens, Saul Bellow, and I.B. Singer are to be written, edited, published, and read in the next century. While I do believe readers make themselves and that many of them—being masters of their local libraries—never use a college; still, it is not too much to require that our most expensive public and private institutions—our colleges and universities—make their degrees synonymous with well-instructed and competent readers.

**References**

The Role of the Agent

A.L. HART

AGENTS ARE MIDDLEMEN (and please let us not do the all-but-obligatory minuet of "middlewomen"/"middlepeople" nonsense). The middleman, throughout recorded history, has had a somewhat unsavory reputation: he performs an often necessary and beneficial function, but his existence is just as often barely tolerated and as a rule not many people come to his funeral. Giraudoux's opinion of the middleman, as expressed in "The Madwoman of Chaillot," would, I think, be endorsed by a great many creative artists, businessmen, and other deep thinkers. However, there he is, and there he'll stay, so we may as well make the best of it.

The most charitable view of the agent's role might be to regard him as an old-fashioned marriage broker. Very well, we're back to the sexist problem, because matchmakers have traditionally been women. Never mind. Let's just press on and if any passions are inflamed we'll use them to light a cigar with.

Anyway, agents—and throughout this discourse I will use the word to denote literary agents: I know nothing of Left Coast movie/TV agents, agents for shortstops, agents provocateurs or any other such fat catalyst agents, as I was saying, are constantly trying to marry off their clients to honorable, upright and otherwise eligible publishers, mates capable of paying the amount of money specified in the marriage (publishing) contract.

When this has been successfully accomplished, the client is almost always an enthusiastic bride, perhaps not so much blushing as flushed if


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the post-ceremony reception/luncheon involved martinis. The happy lass is only too glad to award her hardworking broker 10 percent of the marriage settlement. In the agent's world, the bride never brings a dowry to the proceedings; the prospective groom foots the bill for everything. But being a canny, much-married and heavily belawyered creature, he will exact stipulations in the marriage contract which the client-bride had better be aware of before she signs and leaps into the connubial bed. Her agent is there to point out the drawbacks and pitfalls. And he had better do so in writing because within six months or so the disenchanted wife may be shouting: "Get me out of this! How could you have been so stupid as to have involved me with this cruel, callous, insensitive brute?" (Ah, well, you did have the benefit of my cautionary words and still chose to execute the agreement, my dear....) And just who is the Beast to whom Beauty was so precipitately flung? Another damned middleman!

More sexual confusion now, because the essential role of the editor to whom the client has been wed is that of midwife rather than husband. Editor and client work together to give birth to a viable product. And if it is stillborn, well, that happens sometimes. But by then the midwife is working with other clamorously enceinte ladies and will have scant time to deal with the loud laments of a mama manquée.

It is all sort of dreary, really. Where are those literary marriages made in heaven? Perkins and Wolfe. Perkins and Hemingway. Perkins and Fitzgerald. A minuscule percentage of them can be located on The New York Times best-seller list. The rest is silence.

Cynical? Not at all. Between the first motion and the final frustration there is a lot of fun to be had by all—a lot of uplifting talk, healthy hope, and in some cases quite interesting sums of money. Time now to face some hard facts.

**Hard Fact #1:** Most writers—by which I mean people who have actually written a manuscript—won't succeed in getting an agent.

**Hard Fact #2:** Many writers who manage to get an agent won't get a publisher.

**Hard Fact #3:** Many writers who manage to get a publisher will feel that their book never got a fair shake. There was no advertising, or what there was was too little too late, and besides, it misrepresented the author's achievement. The jacket was misleading or vomitous or both. No friend or relative was ever able to find a copy of the book in a local bookstore, even the one around the corner from where the author lives. None of the heady publicity breaks, so airily discussed over suprême de
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volaille early on, ever eventuated once the work was entrusted to the careless custodianship of an indifferent public.

The accomplished agent will have on tap 167 ready explanations for what went wrong and why. True, the publisher did indeed fail to do thus and so, thus breaking his sacred vows; but no, the agent cannot horsewhip the publisher at high noon on the steps of The Century Club because, well, the agent has another project or two cooking at that very moment with that very publisher and....

Which is not to say that a good agent will not fight like a mother tiger for the client; he will, and publishers understand and expect this. To be realistic, however, an agent's effectiveness is pretty much limited to those issues covered by the contract. If a problem arises that was not anticipated by contractual provisions, it is unlikely that the agent's most passionate intercession and protest will carry the day.

The author's best defense is to be a good author—the sort that commands respectful reviews and earns a tidy profit for the house. In short, the sort of property who would be welcomed by any other publisher. With this kind of leverage, authors can usually win the skirmishes that arise from time to time with or without the help of their agents.

It is almost always a tactical error for an author and his agent to confront the publisher together. Whatever the outcome of the meeting, the author-agent team is committed to it if both were present. Divide and conquer is a good rule: let the agent or author go to the mat alone; that way, nothing final can be agreed to without consultation with the absent party. This gives the team time to catch its breath, regroup and come up with new alternatives and better strategy.

The law of life that governs most relationships obtains between publisher and writer: whoever holds the better cards can almost always expect to win unless he plays his hand foolishly.

Back for a moment to contract negotiation. This is the area in which the agent will earn at least 8 of his 10 percent commission. Since contracts are drawn up by publishers, it goes without saying that the odds are heavily with the house. It is up to the agent to wrest "concessions," to rewrite the boilerplate so as to safeguard the author's best financial interests. Again, the prestige (brute clout) of the author involved will be the decisive factor in all negotiations. If the publisher needs the author more than the author needs the publisher, the agent will enjoy relatively smooth sailing. He will—and does—present the publisher with certain bottom-line demands that are not subject to
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compromise. But this is rare. More often, the author is desperately anxious to have his book published and is willing to sacrifice a good many points rather than risk rejection. The publisher, having correctly sized up the situation, will stand firm despite any amount of eloquence on the part of the agent. Appeals to his better nature will fall upon deaf ears. It will become abundantly clear that the publisher has no better nature. Take it or leave it. That decision is the author’s to make after listening carefully to his agent’s recital of the pros and cons of the matter and weighing the agent’s considered advice.

Most often, however, the cards are evenly distributed, and negotiation becomes just that—a give-and-take proposition with compromises galore and quid pro quo’s falling reluctantly into place. I suppose that plea bargaining is much the same.

This brings us to the whole subject of lawyering. Some agents are licensed lawyers—most are not—and all should make it their business to surround the legalities of a publishing contract, which over the years has become a rather sophisticated instrument. Here I must make use of that classic cop-out and say that it is not within the purview of this article to dissect the standard publishing contract, the implication being that if I chose I could comment incisively on the ramifications of this or that clause for a very extended period of time. The Author’s League has done and continues to do a thorough and honorable job of just that in their official bulletins, and I commend their findings and advice to any interested party.

In a general, catchall sort of way, however, I would suggest that any author/agent pay particular attention to the terms relating to division of proceeds, royalties affected by discount sales, repayment of monies received, reserves for returns, accounting procedures, options, and obligations in the event of litigation. With the increasing importance of electronic methods of reproduction—cassettes, terminals, floppy disks and God knows what all—contracts will tend to greater and greater complexity. One day the specialized jargon will be intelligible only to the High Priests of the Temple who serve The Great Computer.

One thing I am sure of: No matter how arcane the publishing contract may become, it will still be easier to understand than the average theatrical film/television contract. I am a coward: I use co-agents on the Left Coast to handle dramatic rights on a split-fee basis. They know how to speak the language. By the same token, I have a sturdy London Connection to take care of British and foreign sales. The cost to the client in each case is less than he would pay his publisher for performing (less well in most cases) the same services. Some agents—
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and among them some of the best—undertake to provide the client with total representation under one roof: books, movies, television, translation rights, United Kingdom deals, magazine serialization, newspaper syndication, and commercial rights involving recordings, T-shirts, dolls, glassware, and wallpaper (mazel tov!).

Did talk of lawyering suggest to you that the normal relationship obtaining between author and publisher might accurately be described as adversarial? Right on, alas. I wish it were not so, but it is, and it will continue to be. Each side is to blame, but because publishers are better organized than authors, I think they must assume the greater responsibility for the situation.

Corporate entities, if not Goliaths, do have the advantages of bureaucratic entrenchment, computerized facelessness, adamantine House Policies, traditional industrial precedents—and money. Authors are corporeal entities, if not Davids, standing pretty much alone, their unique talent their best defense, highly visible and individual and vulnerable—and seldom wealthy. One has to see them as the underdog in an unequal struggle. Writers ply a lonely trade; publishers attend endless meetings and lunch convivially. If powerful publishers must beware of smugness, writers must guard against the arrogance of loners. The two forces would seem to have been specifically designed for collision course confrontation.

Publishing has evolved (I use the word loosely) from a rather genteel cottage industry to a somewhat self-conscious arm of the monolithic entertainment business. The hit-or-flop syndrome of Hollywood, Broadway and Nashville has permeated editorial offices everywhere, and idealistic young men and women entering the wonderful world of letters soon learn to toe the bottom line, in contemplation of which they soon discover that their personal tastes and convictions may not be merely immaterial but downright dangerous. But the young are quick studies, and it is not long before they succeed in absorbing a system of values having very little to do with what they learned to esteem as English majors.

At its inspired best, publishing is a craft. More important though, it is a real business, no longer an occupation for gentlemen—if indeed it ever was. My impression of those legendary heads of houses both in New York and London is that they were successful in direct proportion to their capacities for ruthlessness, cunning, chicanery and general all-around bloodmindedness. But they were fiercely individualistic, and a lot of them had excellent taste.
Today's agent hopes to sell a manuscript to an editor, but in reality he is selling to a committee on which the marketing director may well have the last word. There are good, conscientious editors around, people who care about good books, good writing, and who even like authors as a class. Some of them are intuitively gifted and can, with great finesse, help an author to realize his own intentions. I wish there were more of these editors at work today. I also wish that the editor who takes over one of my books would at the same time take over the author—become his friend and confidante as well as a business partner. This does not happen very often. The proof of one pudding usually determines the course of future developments. The concept of continuity is seldom mentioned. Editors move from place to place with astonishing rapidity: the LMP (Literary Market Place) is never up-to-date. It is not unusual for an author to complain that in getting his one book through the works he had to deal with three or four different editors. So much for continuity. Worse, from the author's point of view, he notices an inexorable diminution of enthusiasm as he is passed from hand to hand. He has been orphaned.

To be fair, authors are as much to blame as publishers for the erosion of the whole idea of continuity. Time was when a house expected to do several books for a given writer before throwing in the towel. It was a given that the author would have to be "brought along," "established," and "nurtured." But in the course of events, a highly successful author would bolt to greener pastures as swiftly as possible, leaving a rancid taste in the mouth of the publisher who had risked his time and money on an unknown commodity—the Frankenstein bit.

Ah, you will say, but this is just the sort of volatility that makes agenting worthwhile, right? Yes, right, to a degree. Shifting a writer from firm to firm generally means more short-term income. There are drawbacks, however. The new imprint, having paid handsomely for a new author, will expect handsome dividends on its investment, failing which it may consign the culprit to outer darkness. Conglomerates aside, publishing remains a small business encompassed by a tightly woven grapevine, and word soon gets around. An author who has succumbed to the blandishments of a rival house only to be discarded later on by that house is sometimes regarded by the rest of the publishing community as damaged goods. Finding another berth may not be easy.

I, for one, would be pleased indeed if 90 percent of my active clients were happily ensconced and stayed that way. Not so exciting, maybe, or not so immediately profitable, but in the long run better in every way including fiscal.
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But I am a conservative. I no longer believe that change and improvement are synonymous. At one time it was expected that writers of proven worth would submit a completed manuscript for consideration. Today, asking for more than a chapter or two and an outline of the balance is considered an insulting vote of no confidence. Wouldn’t it be better in this instance to revert to the way it used to be in the bad old days? With a complete manuscript in hand, there is no nervous guesswork. The agent could say: “I’ve read it; I know what it’s worth; give us that or pass.” The publisher could say: “It’s better than his last if not quite so good as the one before that. We’ll take a chance on it.” Or: “Look, Bob, this one isn’t going to sell. How about shelving it?” Bob will in that case probably give his agent instructions to withdraw the manuscript and place it elsewhere. But he might surprise us; he might, upon due reflection, decide to put a loser on ice. If the book really is a loser, how much better to acknowledge it sooner rather than later, how much better if there is no advance to be repaid, no embarrassing dialogue to wade through.

Speaking of money, it may be an agent’s major preoccupation but it is not and cannot be his only criterion. Ten percent of $7500 is only $750—about what a smaller agency spends per month for phone service and postage. And survival is not only important, it is mandatory. But no, there are other satisfactions. Selling a novel you really liked for $3000 can sometimes be more satisfying than selling a nonfiction how-to for $30,000. More fulfilling to see a writer you really like and believe in get a break than making a substantial deal for a writer who has all the angles figured, a lively sense of hype and no sense of gratitude. Agents like to have odds-on favorites who predictably gallop on to victory, but our hearts are with the dark horse.

Speaking of horses, we should head into the home stretch of this alarmingly idiosyncratic report on the state of the art. What sort of person becomes an agent? Why? Good questions. No good answers. The current LMP lists over two hundred agencies housing a total of perhaps 600-1000 agents, all of whom are individuals, as distinctive as fingerprints or snowflakes—though they might all look alike to the untrained naked eye. I think we are an unusually peculiar breed with highly subjective approaches to our job. You are probably aware that literary agents, unlike, say, real estate agents, are not required to pass any examinations in order to get a license. No license is involved—in the sense of something suitable for framing. We become agents simply by saying that that’s what we are. Just print up the stationery and we’re in business.
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Once self-proclaimed, however, an agent must perform. Good performance depends on a number of qualities, many of them intangible. Optimism tempered by realism, for example. Patience. A flair for innovative lateral thinking, being able to attack a problem from a fresh perspective and achieving a solution to the seemingly insoluble. A knowledge of the marketplace. An acquaintance with a wide range of editors and their predilections. A feel for the written word. A respect for the creative drive and an instinct for curbing and directing that drive. An unswerving belief that books matter and that the writers and publishers of books matter. Flexibility where compromise is called for, and firmness when principle cannot be compromised.

What basically attracts us to the job may be the element of play. If it weren't fun, the game wouldn't be worth the candle.
In the beginning are the words: fifty thousand, seventy-five thousand, a hundred thousand or more. They comprise the book manuscripts that arrive at my agency's offices each day in sturdy gray canvas mail sacks or piled on the United Parcel Service man's creaking dolly. A few weeks ago, the day's batch was assigned to our readers for preliminary evaluation. Our readers are a congenial group of highly intelligent men and women who have all worked at publishing houses and are voracious consumers of literature, the kind who, after reading manuscripts all day for a living, love nothing more than to settle down with a good book at the end of the day. These people have excellent taste and well-honed commercial instincts, and they take great joy in discovering new talent, a joy made keener by the generous bonus I offer for any manuscript they recommend that goes on to get sold.

They have completed their appraisals of the manuscripts that came in two weeks ago, and written their reports and recommendations. If a recommendation was favorable, or even ambivalent, the manuscript was then routed to one of my associates or to me. Now, at 10 A.M., after filling our mugs from the coffee machine in our kitchen, my staff and I have sat down to talk about the manuscripts before us. As you are an agent-in-training, I would like to invite you to attend today's conference so you can be privy to the process by which the fate of those manuscripts is determined. And as you are also an author, and your own manuscript may be among those discussed this morning, I know you'll want to be there. How do you take your coffee?

You will hear a great deal of talk, because, like just about everyone else in the publishing industry, we are nothing if not articulate. After all, our livelihoods, and our firm’s reputation and credibility, depend on how accurately we express our feelings about what we read. Nevertheless, the essence of all that talk talk talk can be summarized in a brutally blunt three-word question: *Is it salable?* Cookbook, western, how-to, inspirational, thriller, juvenile—it doesn’t matter what kind of book it is, the question is always the same. The issue is not how well the book is written, for the quality of the writing is only one factor in the decision-making process, and not always the key one. A well-written book may be just as unsalable as a poorly written one; it just breaks your heart a little more to return it to the author.

Precisely what are the factors that go into the decision-making process? What criteria do agents apply when they review manuscripts? What do agents know, or think they know, that you don’t know about the publishing market? Well, after more than two decades in the publishing field as both agent and writer, I’ve concluded, not without a great deal of sadness, that the decision to publish almost invariably boils down to a question of economics.

Someday, somebody a lot smarter than I will write a book showing how, throughout history, literature has been shaped by the prices of books. And I will tell everyone I know to go and buy that book. For I am convinced that inspiration, craftsmanship, creativity, and other authorly qualities are less important in determining what writers write and what publishers publish than such factors as lumberjacks’ wages, the cost of a typesetter’s home mortgage, the prime rate, and New York City’s real-estate taxes. Irrelevant though these may seem at first, they constitute some of the economic forces that influence book pricing, and the price of books is the dominant factor in editorial decision-making today, the unseen but dictatorial chairman of every publishing board.

This may be a painful pill for would-be Faulkners and Austens to swallow, and my last desire is to denigrate the miraculous processes by which raw inspiration is transmuted into literature. But I have to declare in all candor that no one interested in being published in our time can afford to be so naive as to believe that a book will make it merely because it’s good.

Although inflation has driven the cost of everything up, it has particularly affected the way people dispose of discretionary income, and trade books (books of general interest, as opposed to text, professional, and other books for specialized markets) are definitely discretionary purchases. Book buyers who didn’t hesitate to buy a hardcover
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novel in a bookstore for $9.95 a few years ago are now passing up comparable books at $14.95. Airline passengers who used to purchase three paperbacks at once for $1.75 each now carefully examine the racks and ultimately choose only one, selling for $3.95.

Because high prices have made book buyers extremely picky (I'm not even sure I'd pay $14.95 for my own novel in a store!), the publishing market has become very best-seller oriented, and the industry dominated by the blockbuster mentality that seeks guaranteed profits through tried-and-true big-name authors writing in tried-and-true formulas. The pressures created by that mentality are exerted on writers, forcing them to write books of a certain kind or a certain length or a certain style, and in many cases forcing them out of the writing profession entirely. So I don't think it's far-fetched at all to imagine that a hike in lumberjacks' wages, which will in turn affect the cost of paper, might influence a publishing decision to raise book prices, leading in turn to a phone call from an editor to an author along the lines of, "Listen, Mr. Tolstoy, if we're going to hold the price of your book below $19.95, you'll have to do some judicious pruning in the 'Peace' section and get right into the 'War' stuff. Maybe you could trim that ballroom scene, edit some of Sonya's business, chop the prebattle chitchat, and for God's sake get rid of that peasant and his dog...."

These cynical observations won't win me many friends and I certainly don't endorse the blockbuster mentality (unless the blockbuster happens to be by one of my clients), but I have to be completely frank with authors who seek publication in the general market: Whatever else your book may be, it must be profitable. And books that have little else to recommend them beyond being good are all too often marginally profitable, or not profitable at all.

There are four broad categories of books with commercial potential: backlist, frontlist, midlist, and genre. As we shall see, it's well-nigh impossible to define these categories narrowly, and they have a tendency to run into each other and blur at the edges. A frontlist best seller may become a backlist classic that sells for decades; a genre western may be so extraordinary as to sell outside its traditional market and even make the best-seller list. A midlist author may at last write a book that hits the best-seller list, and discover publishers frenziedly bidding for the right to reissue his old, out-of-print genre books, to his embarrassment or amusement. Let's look at these categories more closely.

**Backlist books.** Backlist books are books that sell over a long term. Their appeal for publishers is steady performance, predictability of market, and easy maintenance. Although it wouldn't be accurate to say
backlist books sell themselves, they certainly don't require the special treatment demanded by books vying for a place on the best-seller list. As long as the overhead—printing, warehousing, servicing of orders, and so forth—doesn't get too high, the backlist can provide a publisher with his basic income and carry the firm over the roller-coaster ups and downs that attend the publishing of new books. Professional books, textbooks, cookbooks and other how-to's, classics, and juveniles fall into the category of backlist books. *Lost Horizons, Gone with the Wind, Catcher in the Rye, The Caine Mutiny,* and *Exodus* are examples of best sellers that continue to sell briskly year in and year out after dropping off the list. Other books, such as *The Oxford Book of English Verse* or Paul Samuelson's textbook *Economics,* may never have hit the best-seller list, but move in enormous quantities over the long haul, and indeed over the long haul may outsell the blockbuster that struts and frets its hour upon the stage and then is heard no more. The Bible, of course, is always held up as the epitome of backlist books.

Unfortunately, the backlist has become harder and harder to maintain over the last few decades. The cost of printing and warehousing books that move too slowly, the cost of servicing and bookkeeping on single-copy orders, the cutbacks in library funding, the paperback revolution, the rise of the bookstore chains with their emphasis on fast turnover of merchandise, all these and other factors militate against profitability in backlist publishing. More and more, publishers want to get in with books, get out with the profit, and the hell with posterity. So, like so much else in modern life, books have become more and more disposable—literally as well as literarily. They fall apart after a few years, or even after a few readings.

**Frontlist books.** The frontlist is a publisher's new releases, the books on which he pins his hopes for this season's success. Although not every book is expected or even intended to go on the best-seller list, it can safely be said that publishers do expect every new book at least to earn a profit; to hit a best-seller list, to become a solid backlist item, or just to burn brightly for a few months in the bookstores before being remaindered.

The apotheosis of the successful frontlist book is the best seller, the book that appears on recognized lists such as those in *The New York Times Book Review* or *Publishers' Weekly.* Other than that qualification, however, it's impossible to find many common denominators on any given list, short-term trends notwithstanding. The *Publishers' Weekly* list before me as I write (November 27, 1981) features dead cats, rabid dogs, rich rabbits, Moscow murders, indecent obsessions, pineap-
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diet, Cinderella complexes, Rubik's Cubes, a book of lights, a light in the attic, cardinal's sins and deadly sins, poured wine and bread upon waters, Abby, Liz, Elvis, Rebecca, Fletch, Andy Rooney, and a confederacy of dunces.

As unclassifiably diverse as these topics are, there is one element running through almost all books on this or any other given best-seller list: At least 75 percent are by authors with previous best-seller track records. This fact cannot be overemphasized; with so many book buyers reluctant to pay high prices for books, the only way to lure them is with familiar, proven big-name authors. You will be more inclined to pay $19.95 for a book by the man who brought you Shogun, or $15.50 for one by the many who brought you The World According to Garp, than you will be to pay the same money for a book by someone who brought you three articles in the Boston Globe, a short story in Redbook, and a poem in the Sewanee Review. Oh, you might buy his book if his publishers package and promote it as if it were by James Clavell (“All the heart-stopping adventure of Shogun!”) or John Irving (“As deeply moving as The World According to Garp!”), but such exceptions only underscore the rule, as is illustrated by a conversation I had with a paperback editor not long ago when I asked her how she intended to “position” a book I’d sold her.

“Well,” she said, “I don’t think it’s strong enough to be our number-one leader for May, or even our second or third leader, but it might make a good fourth or fifth leader.” (“Leaders” are a paperback publisher’s big books for any given month.)

“Wait a minute,” I said. “It sounds as if all the books you publish every month are called leaders.”

“They are!” she exclaimed. “We have to publish every book as if it were a bestseller. If we don’t feel a book has leader potential, we don’t buy it.”

The capital invested in acquiring, merchandising, advertising, and promoting books by brand-name authors is capital taken away from books by new authors, meaning that many a promising talent is frozen out of publishing at the entry level. It simply takes too long, and too many money-losing books, for most publishers to subsidize authors until their commercial potential is at last realized. Oh, a certain number of books by such authors do find their way every year onto publishers’ lists. Why? The reasons range from the deplorable—a publisher needs something, anything, to fill a slot—to the inspiring—a house establishes a policy of reinvesting its profits into the work of new writers,
even if their books lose money. The publishing industry has a term to describe such work: "midlist."

**Midlist books.** These books are so called because they occupy the middle of a publisher’s list between the blockbusters at one end of the spectrum and the backlist and genre books (mysteries, westerns, romances, and so forth) at the other. Midlist books are often sui generis, and possess neither the "legs" to become best sellers nor the longevity to move steadily on a backlist.

If "midlist" sounds as if it has an opprobrious connotation—well, it does. The writing of midlist books, to quote a line Finley Peter Dunne used in another context, "isn’t a crime exactly. Ye can’t be sint to jail f’r it, but it’s kind’ve a disgrace." Midlist authors are authors who have published and perished. They are easily identified at publishing parties, if they’ve been invited at all, as the people embarrassedly listing the titles of their books for listeners politely pretending to have heard of those books. Midlist authors are not failures, but they are not successes either.

They are probably the most interesting type of writer, for they are generally intelligent, cultured, articulate, highly skilled craftsmen and craftswomen who care passionately about writing (their own and others’) and bitterly resent the economic forces that have made publishing a branch of the entertainment industry and books the software of a word-processing medium. Nevertheless, many of them feel like losers, and, in the eyes of people who publish books, they may well be losers.

Which is why they don’t stay midlist for long. Some drop out entirely; others shift to genre writing; and others gird their loins, apply themselves mightily, and produce the book that breaks them out of the midlist and vaults them to fame and fortune. Midlist authors who have "broken out" are easily identified at publishing parties, too. They’re the guests of honor.

**Genre books.** Genre books come last in the publishing spectrum, but certainly not least, not in this agent’s value system, anyway. Genre books are popular books that fall into certain traditional categories: westerns, science fiction, mysteries, romances, male adventure, medical novels, occult thrillers, spy thrillers, and the like. Although the story lines of such books frequently follow formulas—the “tip sheets” (guidelines) issued by some romance publishers are intimidatingly elaborate, for example—the tendency among readers, publishers, critics and reviewers, and even writers themselves to oversimplify genre writing has created much confusion and not a little hypocrisy. Confusion because it is all but impossible to define what is and what is not a formula book; hypocrisy because the people who look down their noses at genre
writing are often the same ones who profit from writing and publishing it, or secretly get a kick out of reading it.

Anyone attempting to define a genre too strictly will quickly find himself in deep trouble, for the best genre fiction, paradoxically, is not genre fiction at all. Is *The Ox-Bow Incident* a formula western? Yes and no. Is *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* a formula spy thriller? Yes and no. Is *Murder on the Orient Express* a formula mystery novel? Yes and no. Did the Brontës, Robert Louis Stevenson, Balzac, H.G. Wells, Henry James, write formula fiction? They certainly did! They most assuredly did not!

On the best-seller list before me are represented such genres as mystery (*Gorky Park* by Martin Cruz Smith), occult thriller (*Cujo* by Stephen King), adventure (*Noble House* by James Clavell), romance (*Remembrance* by Danielle Steel), and family saga (*The Legacy* by Howard Fast). Some of these books, and certainly parts of all of them, follow formulas. In fact, many of these and other best-selling authors got their start writing formula fiction at sweatshop rates.

Like a metallurgist sorting out rare metals from their baser kin, the agent weighs story line, characterization, and writing skill in each manuscript that comes before him, to determine whether a book fits into a very narrow category, or has the potential to break out of its category, as the above-named best sellers have done. Indeed, many agents literally weigh their manuscripts. By merely hefting one and doing a rough word count, a good agent can often tell if a book is long enough to have big-book potential, for, with few exceptions, genre books of 50,000-60,000 words cannot attain the complexity and dimension necessary to make a nice juicy read.

Because it is so hard to define genre fiction, and because genre writing is the breeding ground for many best-selling if not classic authors, and because genre books pay the rents of all mass-market publishers, let those who do not profit from genre books cast the first stone. The terms *hack*, to describe genre writers, and *trash*, to describe the product of their labors, are not only offensive but inaccurate. If there are hack writers, there are also hack publishers and, for that matter, hack readers. No one in the publishing industry who knows what's involved in writing and publishing genre books calls them trash. Even the most formulaic of romances calls for highly developed skills, and while genre books are far and away the best means for aspiring writers to break into the book field, anyone believing he'll simply dash off a quickie paperback to raise a few thousand easy bucks is in for a rude surprise.
From year to year, genres go in and out of fashion. In the early 1970s, gothic novels were all the rage, then they suddenly fell from grace and were replaced by historical romances and family sagas. Then historical romances faded and were supplanted by contemporary romances, which are the **dernier cri** in women’s fiction at this writing. Male genres such as westerns and adventure, quiescent for much of the seventies, have come back strong in the early eighties in the form of adult (ultra-sexy, ultraviolent) western series, war and soldier-of-fortune series, spy thrillers, and the like. Science fiction, which peaked after the *Star Wars* phenomenon, has settled down; movie tie-ins, which may also have peaked after the *Star Wars* phenomenon, are at present moribund; occult fiction, whose demise has been predicted annually ever since *The Exorcist*, continues to be as healthy as ever; mysteries, whose revival has been predicted annually for even longer, continue to flounder.

Whatever the current trend may be, genres will always be with us, and genre writers will be the lifeblood of the publishing industry and, if I may be so bold, of literature itself. So here’s my last word on genre writers. If I had room on my client list for only one more writer, and had to choose between one who’s had a dozen solid but unspectacular genre paperback originals published and one whose first novel was a best seller, I would be all but paralyzed with indecision, having seen so many of the former kind soar to wealth and glory, and so many of the latter fall ignominiously on their rear ends.

Well, our meeting is over and the decisions have been made. The manuscripts have been sorted and we’re ready to go into action. The rejected manuscripts are in this pile, the genre stuff in this, the books with midlist and backlist potential in that pile over there, and here, sitting on my desk like missiles poised on their launching pads, are the few we think can go all the way. Which pile is yours in?

The Production of Books

LEONARD SHATZKIN

In most industries which produce for the consumer market, company management is very much involved in the production process. Whether it is pens, automobiles, breakfast cereals, or computers, top management is intimately concerned with production in all its detail. Indeed, in some cases, the production process is all management is concerned with.

In a sense this is true of book publishing as well. The publisher thinks of his product as being the words of the author, amended, and improved by the work of the publisher's editors. Management certainly involves itself in that production process—in selecting the manuscript, refining it, creating the personality of the book, launching it properly. But the production of the physical package in which the author's words are delivered to the reader—the book itself—is an altogether different matter.

It is curious that, with one outstanding exception (Doubleday), book publishing management is proudly ignorant of how type is set or books are printed and bound. With that same exception, none of the technological advances of the last fifty years have been developed, or even suggested, by publishers. The improvements have all come from suppliers to the publishing industry, and have been introduced over the lethargy and sometimes the downright opposition of the publishers themselves. The fact that Doubleday, the one outstanding exception to this generalization, has transformed book manufacturing more than all the industry innovators combined, does not negate the statement that

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publishers in general do not know and do not especially care about the technology of book production. As a gesture, an important publishing executive may be ceremoniously shown through a composing room, pressroom or bindery, express his polite ooh’s and aah’s, remark at the marvelously impressive machinery, express his gratitude for the care taken with his books and the sensitivity to his scheduling needs—and then be taken to the best local restaurant for lunch.

Top management is happy to delegate to the production manager the responsibility for getting the books made and for knowing whatever is necessary about the various steps involved in going from manuscript to finished book. And, though he spends more of the company’s money than anyone else in the firm, and may even be rewarded with a vice-presidency to supplement inadequate compensation, the production manager is a junior executive. His function is a service function, and it figures as a service function in the strategy of publishing management.

In the eyes of publishing management, the principal functions of the production manager are keeping track of an immense amount of detail, locating and cultivating suppliers whose prices are at the low end of the range, and managing to get books delivered on targeted dates, usually after the publisher’s editorial and art departments have fallen hopelessly behind schedule. All this is, of course, an overstatement—principally in being much too encompassing a generalization. There are production managers who are much more than canny shoppers and super housekeepers. There are a few who have pushed their way into the management circle on a basis approaching executive equality with other major functions.

In most publishing houses the production manager is expected to “produce” the book as it is handed to him, with all the editorial decisions and scheduling requirements already made by others. Frequently even the design decisions—choice of typeface, number of pages—are outside the production manager’s jurisdiction. It is not surprising that the production manager’s function, as seen by himself and by his management, is to get that book produced in the best and most economical way. And that usually reduces, in large part, to the selection of suppliers for the various operations who have the right balance of quality, price and scheduling flexibility for that book within the publisher’s overall strategy of maintaining good relations with several suppliers for each operation.

The principal concern of the publisher’s production manager is to determine who will set the type, who will print, and who will bind. He makes those decisions on the basis of a judgment of the cost and the
quality each supplier represents. The evaluation and selection among available alternatives certainly seems a straightforward and sensible policy. Unfortunately, in the present state of book production, it misses the point. It matters much less who does the typesetting, the printing, the binding; it matters much more how it is done. Because how it is done by imaginative use of the new technology, can produce dramatic savings many times greater than any advantage gained by using this or that supplier.

And yet, the available technology is being ignored to a remarkable degree by book publishers. Why? After all many other producers of printed material have taken much fuller advantage of new devices and new methods. The reason lies precisely in that lack of interest by publishing management in the production process (though not in the financial results!) and the division of responsibility which flows from that: we will give the production manager the book with all the decisions made and he will produce it.

Putting the new technology to work can only be done properly by changing what happens to the book project before it reaches the production manager. The steps the editors and designer have taken and the decisions they have made effectively lock the production manager out of anything except minor adaptations of routine production techniques. To be sure, today's routine techniques are miles ahead—faster, surer, less expensive—than the methods used in the manufacture of books a few years ago. They have improved book manufacture tremendously—but only a fraction of the improvement possible if they were more systematically applied.

When I was finally fortunate enough to enter book publishing right after World War II, type was being set at the rate of about 4000 characters (letters and spaces) an hour on a machine (Linotype) that added its own mistakes to those introduced by the operator. Today's typesetting machines can run at 2.5 million characters per hour, and do not know how to make mistakes.

The metal (an alloy of lead, tin and antimony) lines produced back then were painstakingly divided into pages by hand, and the lines set separately for running heads and folios were added by hand. One could print from the metal type (and frequently did), or, to withstand greater use, mold or electroplate metal duplicates of the type and print from those stereos or electros. The pages of type or the stereos or electros were positioned on the printing press in proper relation to each other so that the sequence of pages would be correct on the folded sheets. The
process—from the corrected linotype galleys to pages properly arranged in "forms" for the press—took many hours, sometimes a few days.

Today the same machine that sets the type (faultlessly correct) at 500 or 600 times the speed of the linotype, can set it directly in page form so that the "makeup" step is not necessary, and will, if you like, automatically place the page images in proper position on the printing plate for the folding operation. What took hours or days before (and the labor of several skilled craftsmen) can be done in almost zero time today with no labor whatsoever.

Printing was usually done in "forms" of 64 pages printed separately on each side of the paper at a speed of about 1000 sheets per hour. There were some presses, reserved for larger quantities, which printed 128 pages at a time (64 on each side) at 1200 sheets per hour. The sheets went from the presses to folding machines which could handle 64 pages at about 1000 sheets per hour.

Today's printing presses can produce 64 pages or 128 pages, printed and folded, at about 25,000 sheets per hour (twenty to twenty-five times the earlier speed), using perhaps 5 percent of the man hours previously used for these processes. The folded sheets used to be put through a series of complicated maneuvers, including sewing, to produce hardbound jacketed books at the rate (in better organized shops) of about 1000 books per hour. Today's binding "lines," immensely simplified, using glue instead of thread, and a fraction of the personnel, produce 3000 hard-bound books an hour and some are faster than that.

I cannot resist pointing out that I am referring to the production capabilities at commercial plants generally available to any publisher who wishes to use them. The one exceptional publisher already mentioned has designed and built his own book manufacturing facility. In one smooth operation, starting with unprinted paper and ending, a few minutes later, with fully hardbound books with jackets applied, at a speed of 15,000 books per hour, that facility produces books at less than one-fourth the labor cost and perhaps two-thirds the materials cost of books produced at commercial establishments for other publishers on the most modern equipment commercially available. Except to indicate what might be technologically available in the distant future, if publishers ever "get their act together," this publisher's private facility is not a part of the real publishing world.

Of course the production process is somewhat simpler and somewhat faster for paperbound books which, as a consequence of the mass market paperback phenomenon, have become more popular and, in range of titles, are no longer distinguishable from the hardbound var-
The difference in manufacturing cost is not as great as the difference in retail price might lead the book-reading public to believe. The cover for the hardbound book, and the extra binding operation required to apply it, may cost thirty-five to fifty cents a copy, perhaps. The very much greater differences in retail price between hard and paperbound books are caused to a slight degree by lower royalty, but principally by accounting aberrations and faulty logic which cannot be a part of this discussion.

The technological advances have been truly staggering. Books can be produced today with perhaps one-tenth the labor required when I first arrived at this industry. A book which routinely took four months (and not infrequently six) can be routinely produced in three weeks—in two weeks if the author has used a word processor.

It can be—but it isn't!

The book that used to be produced in four months, and can now be produced in three weeks, is actually now produced in three months, or perhaps three and one-half. (Consider, for example, that much of what you are reading in this publication was submitted by the author months before this issue came off the press—and for that reason alone some information is out of date by the time it is available to the reader.)

The technological advances of the last thirty years have been marvelous and astounding; the advances have taken place much faster than the ability of book publishing management to understand them and to make the changes in internal publishing procedures that must take place to utilize these new minor miracles. Failure to use the new technology properly results in books costing at least 50 percent more, and more likely 100 percent more, than they should cost. It would be incorrect to say that the improvements in producing books have been confined to (inadequately used) technological changes. There has also been some rationalization in the organization of book production which, like the changes in technology, has been largely on the initiative of the manufacturers rather than the publishers.

The rationalization has occurred as the result of two developments. In order to get better control over press schedules, to reduce the space wasted in storing publisher-owned paper stock, and to provide a service which cash-hungry publishers-clients would appreciate, book manufacturers began (in the late 1950s and 1960s) to inventory stocks of paper which could be available, on demand and with virtually no notice, to publishers using their facilities. The obvious advantages of using these papers, gradually (there was no stampede) changed the paper-specifying habits of many publishers for at least a substantial portion of
their titles. Obviously, paper could be stocked only in a limited range of the most popular sizes, colors and textures. As a result, some appreciable portion of the manufacturer's production (representing several publishers) was on identical paper, and it became fairly easy for the manufacturer to schedule such books to follow each other on press, reducing press makeready time as well as paper spoilage.

The second rationalizing development was the introduction of web presses for relatively short runs. Combining the economy of the web press with manufacturer-supplied paper brought makeready costs for web presses below the makeready costs for sheet-fed presses, and also sharply reduced paper spoilage on the web press, which had previously been a serious cost for short-run black and white web offset printing. The result is that it can now be less expensive (subject to the book manufacturer's selling strategy and selling policy) to produce 1000 copies on a web using the manufacturer's paper than to produce the same number by sheet-fed printing on publisher-supplied paper. The technology made this possible thirty-five years ago. It has taken that long for business practices to catch up (if they have, in fact) with reality.

The sad fact is that this leaves publishers' habits only slightly changed from those imposed by the old, almost handicraft methods. The advantages available from the space-age leaps in technique are used only to a tiny degree. We continue to force the new technology to act like the old technology to accommodate deeply ingrained publishers' habits.

The next big rationalizing step would certainly appear to be in more intelligent use of typesetting technology. It is hard to see how the initiative, this time, can come from the supplier, so perhaps the publisher will organize the procedures, all of which are under his control. The payoff is certainly attractive enough—the cost of typesetting can be reduced to one-half or one-third of present costs and at least weeks and possibly months can be cut from the production schedule for new titles. In the process the book would contain fewer errors, and type pages would be better designed and would fit press requirements more precisely.

Perhaps the best way to explain how the procedures should be changed is to review, in general, what the present procedures are:

1. After the manuscript is accepted from the author, it is given to the designer to determine the specifications for the type page. This may be done before any line-editing or copy-editing takes place, or after or during the editing process. In houses that take production cost (or more accurately, the avoidance of production waste) seriously, the designer analyzes the manuscript carefully to plan to have the book
make an even multiple of thirty-two pages. When all the editing steps have been completed, the manuscript goes to the compositor to be set in accordance with the designer's instructions, usually into galleys, sometimes directly into pages.

2. The proofs of the composed type are read for errors, first by the compositor and then by the publisher. The proofs then go to the author, presumably to check for errors (in fact to permit second thoughts) and are sometimes also read by the (more conscientious) editor.

3. The designer usually also sees the proofs, since, if the calculation of length was in error, or if the author's deletions or insertions affect the length, revised paging instructions must be supplied to the compositor.

4. The proofs then go to the compositor to correct, and to make up pages if the first proofs were galleys. Depending on the extent of the corrections, further proofs may be submitted to the publisher for checking.

These procedures evolved when: (a) the typesetter keyboarded the manuscript directly into the typesetting machine so that his accuracy could be checked only by checking the output, and (b) the typesetting machine most widely used (the Linotype) introduced its own mistakes on top of those committed by the keyboarder.

Today's typesetting machines do not make mistakes—or to put it more accurately, the possibility of a machine error is so remote that checking the output to look for one is ludicrous. The typesetting machine produces precisely what the keyboarding tells it to produce.

Modern composition methods have separated keyboarding from the setting of type. Completing all the editing and proofreading steps in the keyboarding stages before a single line of type is set can effect dramatic economies in production time and cost. For manual keyboarding (where error is inevitable), proofreading as a separate step is either unnecessary (because the text exists on word processor disks or equivalent and the proofreading will be a by-product of all the normal editing steps which will precede the typesetting itself), or, if necessary, can be performed before the keyboarder's work is forwarded to the typesetting machine. In fact, keyboarding must be separated from actual setting because while the keyboarder may type 100 words a minute, the machine outputs 7000 words per minute, so keyboarding on the actual composing machine would be ridiculously wasteful.

Keyboarding away from the typesetting machine makes it possible, by "double keyboarding," to avoid "proofreading" in the usual sense. In that system, originally proposed (by me, I believe) in the early 1960s
and now widely practiced, two different keyboarders, chosen because their errors are typically of different patterns, enter the manuscript. Their keystrokes are compared on a computer which highlights any point at which they differ. The manuscript is examined to determine which of the two is correct.

When using a compositor who supplies the service of double keyboarding, the publisher frequently (in fact, usually) frustrates the accuracy introduced by double keyboarding, since he puts the result through the usual “proofreading” steps in which no errors are found, but some rewriting inevitably takes place—so the expense and waste of time in resetting portions of the type is preserved.

But double keyboarding, originally proposed before the development of word processors, is itself obsolete for most applications. It is far more effective for the publisher, at the earliest possible moment, and certainly before any editing of any kind is started, to enter the manuscript into a word processor—if the author has not already done so. The word processor’s computer program can check the manuscript for spelling errors and for simple grammatical errors even before it goes to the editors and author for further work. Thereafter, it is only necessary to enter (and to check) the marks made by proofreaders, editors and the author, including the corrections to the original keyboarding that are discovered each time the word processor “hard copy” is reviewed.

The rationalized procedures would be somewhat as follows:

1. If the manuscript did not come from the author in word-processed form, the publisher would have it keyed into a word processor before any editorial work of any kind was done. All further corrections, emendations, additions, or deletions, whether by author, editor or copy editor would be entered into the manuscript via word processor.

2. After all changes had been made, the manuscript would go to the designer (who would soon be replaced by a set of design rules created by a designer) who, knowing precisely (from the word processor) the length of the manuscript, and the elements requiring typographic decisions, could give precise instructions for typeface, measure, chapter openings, etc.

3. The word processor disks (not the manuscript) would go to the compositor (either physically or via telephone to the compositor’s computer) and the first and only product of the composing machine would be final book pages ready for printing. No further proofreading would be necessary. The time required to produce the pages of a normal book by this procedure is about an hour or two, but with scheduling problems one must allow two or three days. Perhaps as
important is the fact that the delivery of final pages can be accurately predicted, so that press and binding time can be reserved with confidence.

A moderately well-managed production department, using these procedures, can assure publishing management of finished books two to three weeks from the time the editor releases the word processor disks. The time (and the cost) may be cut still further by the introduction of technology already developed and tested but not yet widely available. It is now possible to avoid the use of film in offset platemaking by “setting” the type directly on the printing plate via laser. This procedure is not practical with the trial-and-error typesetting methods currently in use, but is a natural step in the rationalized procedures I am suggesting.

There is not much doubt—taking all these factors into consideration—that either by early entry of the manuscript into a word processor or by double keyboarding the final edited non-word-processor manuscript, books can be typeset at substantially less than one-half present costs and in something like one-tenth the time. One would expect such books to have fewer errors and to meet higher typographic standards than books produced by conventional methods. One would hope that sooner or later, publishers will take better advantage of this technology. Doing so seems a simple matter of internal publishing procedures and nothing more.

Unfortunately, such changes can only result from a determined effort by the publisher to break old habits. It is simple human nature that the current preproduction routines and decisions are deeply ingrained and are accepted by everyone. Bringing them into question creates far more disruption and uneasiness than will result from the changes in the production process itself.

The publisher’s author believes that he must see and correct galley proofs and that waiting weeks to see them is unavoidable. The typesetter believes the author and editor must correct galleys and inevitably re-write sections of the original copy before he can proceed to make pages. The printer understands that the book must be whatever length it is and will often not fit the equipment properly.

The book printer who still, despite the effect of standard papers and web presses, is asked by 100 or 200 publishers to produce books in 100 different sizes and shapes on papers of 50 different textures, weights and colors, does not dare argue too strongly that a saving would result if this exaggerated variety could be reduced to more reasonable levels. He “knows” it is not possible. Although the number of typesetters and
printing and binding establishments continues to decline, there are enough around to assure unrelenting competition. Suppliers long ago learned that making suggestions for changes in the publisher's internal procedures, or in the specifications for the finished book, suggestions aimed at reducing cost by making production more efficient, can easily result in the work going to a competitor who unquestioningly takes what he is given and makes the best of it.

It seems far wiser to produce to uneconomical specifications, even taking a ridiculously low profit in so doing, than to risk implying lack of wisdom in the editor, or lack of expertise in the production manager. Besides, in the nature of things, with hundreds of customers and thousands of production situations, the book manufacturer is equipped, in his equipment as well as his psychology, to accept confusing variation and inefficient customers as facts of life. Actually, so intent is the book manufacturer on being a faithful servant, that as the publisher changes his own practices to make use of the new technological opportunities, it may be necessary to reorganize the manufacturer as well. Nevertheless, because the shift from sheet-fed presses to web presses has made it harder for the publisher to insist on inefficiencies, printing and binding of books are performed somewhat closer to their technological potential than is composition.

Back in the 1950s, in a letterpress room containing sheet-fed presses of only two different sizes, Country Life Press produced books in approximately 250 different trimmed sizes. Hard to imagine! But each book was designed quite independently of any other book, and as long as the sheet to be printed was at the limit or below the limit of size the press could handle, there was no obvious reason (technological or financial) why it could not be printed. And occasionally the trimmed size of a book was chosen precisely because it was different from other books. If the next book to be produced was a different trimmed size (as it almost always was) from the previous book, or on a paper different in color, weight or texture, various machines had to be adjusted at a substantial cost in time and in the material run through the machine to test and stabilize the adjustment. Partly for this reason, the equipment at Country Life Press (like the equipment at all commercial book manufacturers) was of the slow, easily adjustable kind.

Even with that slow printing and binding equipment, reducing the number of trimmed sizes would have resulted in producing twice as many books without adding a single man hour to the labor cost. Put another way, the labor cost component (at least half the total) of the total production cost would have been reduced to half. And, no small advan-
tage, the reduction in adjustment of machines would have improved the overall quality of the books produced. But the assurance of that volume of work on less varied specifications would have made it sensible to introduce faster, less easily adjustable, machinery which would have produced at six or eight times the overall rate of the existing equipment, reducing the labor cost to something like 5 or 10 percent of the labor cost of what was acknowledged to be a completely (at the time) "modern" plant.

The web presses currently used tend to enforce some discipline on trimmed sizes. The choice of web press tends to dictate one dimension of the book, because if the circumference of the press cylinder is something other than an exact multiple of the width or height of the book, the waste of paper is too obvious to miss. On the other hand, the width of the paper roll can be varied within wide limits with no waste of paper—and it is.

Even more important, however, the web press changes the publisher's thinking about trimmed size. The variation in size on a sheet-fed press is costly in efficiency but need not involve any paper waste. On the web press any variation in size from a size dictated by cylinder circumference results in a clear waste of paper trimmed from the signature and thrown away. The cost is much clearer to the publisher. He is less insistent on unlimited freedom, more inclined toward making a book the size most efficiently delivered by that particular press. In web plants, therefore, and among publishers using web presses, the variation in trimmed size (expressed in number of sizes coming off the same machine) has probably been reduced by a factor of ten.

Commendable, not because books should all be the same trimmed size, or because there should be a restriction on number of sizes, but because the trimmed size chosen for a book should have a reason, functional or aesthetic, and not be the result of a whim which may actually defeat the intent. Making two books in the same trimmed size makes sense because it can in itself provide substantial economies and manufacturing advantages. It also makes possible an organized flow of production which results in additional savings. If books were printed and bound in groups of books of the same size on paper of the same specifications, the savings would be somewhat as follows:

1. The economies of web press printing and the high speed binding line would be available on runs as low as 2000 to 3000 copies instead of on those above 10,000 copies as at present.
2. Paper usage would be decreased by 2 to 20 percent, depending upon number of copies produced. In addition, there might be some saving
Leonard Shatzkin

in cost per pound because of buying paper in larger quantity. Experience also suggests that money invested by the publisher in paper inventory would be sharply reduced, perhaps as much as 50 percent.

3. Less binding material (for hardbound books) would be wasted, and the cost of fabricating covers would be reduced 10 or 15 percent.

4. Printing and binding cost, hardcover or paperback, would be reduced 10 to 25 percent depending upon number of copies produced.

5. The time required to print and bind books, new or reprint, would be reduced by about three weeks in well-run production departments and more than that in poorly run ones. Permitting later decisions on printing quantities would enable management to order quantities more accurately related to actual need. It is not farfetched at all to suggest that, with proper scheduling, copies of new titles could be ready, routinely, three weeks from the publisher's release for typesetting and reprints of already published titles within ten days of the publisher's order.

In the course of responding to cost pressures by sacrificing quality, publishers (in addition to degrading the paper and the binding materials) have, bit by bit, accepted adhesive binding (laughingly named "perfect binding") in place of sewing to hold the book together. Adhesive binding, as it is currently practiced, frequently produces a book which does not stand up to use as well as a sewed book.

But that does not have to be the case. An adhesive-bound book can actually be stronger than a sewed book by using a technique—Hellerbinding—in which neither publishers nor bookbinders have shown much interest. Why the lack of interest? Because preliminary estimates indicated that Hellerbinding would add about a penny a copy to the binding cost. It certainly seems worth the added cost—though it is my opinion that the increased binding line speed possible with Hellerbinding would more than compensate for the penny, actually making it less expensive in practice.

One dream among the more farsighted people involved in the production of books has been to reduce the multiple operations of printing, folding, gathering, binding and jacketing to one smooth continuous operation. The advantages in speed, control, labor cost and material spoilage are obvious.

The ingenious belt press for printing the entire book in one pass was, unfortunately, technologically out-of-date before it was finally perfected. Despite its technological obsolescence, the belt press is widely used because the failure to use web offset presses properly makes the belt press seem advantageous.

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What is needed, of course, is an offset adaptation of the direction taken by Doubleday: a press (or rather a book machine) that prints, binds and jackets a book, of whatever number of pages, in one continuous operation. Books coming from such a printing press could be produced—printed, bound and jacketed—at speeds approximating 15,000 copies per hour, delivering a bound, jacketed book approximately three minutes after the press started to run. That is five times the speed of the fastest current lines which use two to three times the personnel that would be required for the high speed line. The dramatic reduction in cost and increase in speed of manufacture of books made possible by better use of existing technology and by application of advances clearly available, has implications far beyond the production process itself.

Getting books closer to the decision to publish means fewer publishing opportunities missed and fewer publishing errors made. Reduced fixed costs in reprinting and faster delivery of reprints will reduce investment in inventory and overstocks, reducing the temptation of publishers to foul their own markets with remainders. The simplification of all procedures inherent in these changes will lower the publisher's internal staff costs in editorial and production departments.

I am certainly the last one to argue that book publishing's shortcomings exist exclusively in the production area. The inefficiencies and waste in the distribution of books contribute much more to higher-than-necessary prices and harder-to-obtain titles than the poor use of available book production resources. But failure to produce economically—particularly when that failure is in the publisher's office itself and not the fault of suppliers—is a disservice both to the author and (when the bumbling distribution system allows him to get his hands on the book) the reader.

While it is true that production of the books is not and should not be the central focus of the publisher's attention, it is hard to understand why it takes publishers so long to use their available opportunities to produce books of higher quality, on considerably faster schedules, at very much lower cost.

The possibilities are exciting to consider. All are solidly based on existing technology and do not need to wait for new inventions or the development of new techniques. If realized, they would reduce the costs, except for materials, to something of the order of one-third present costs, and reduce the time required from months to days.

Is it likely to happen in the 1980s? or even the 1990s? Certainly not the printing and binding "book machine." Although the technology
for the printing and binding line may exist, there is no sign of a driving force or a source of financing within the industry for creating such a line.

On the other hand, the changes in typesetting involve no costs and no adaptations of technology. The changes in typesetting involve no costs and no adaptations of technology. They require only some adjustments in the usual procedures in the publishing house itself—adaptations which would reduce staff, reduce tensions and make life generally more agreeable for publisher and author.
The Marketing of Books—
A National Priority for the Eighties'

MARTIN P. LEVIN

THE MARKETING DILEMMA

Experts agree that marketing in general is most effective when:

1. The object to be marketed has only a few styles which can be easily described or demonstrated,
2. The benefit from the use of the object can be expressed in simple terms,
3. This benefit may be enjoyed by a broad spectrum of users who are able to buy, and these users can be easily identified and reached economically through specific media, and
4. The distribution system is universal, simple, effective, and economically sound.

Most books fail to meet these requirements on every count. This is especially true of trade books (those published for the general reader and sold through the community-based bookstore). Trade books are usually found on the fiction or nonfiction tables in a bookstore, or in general interest collections of the library.

Scholarly books, professional books and textbooks, which are the kinds most profitable to the publisher, meet some of these criteria and have the added benefit in most instances of being required by schools or needed by professionals to improve skills. This article is confined to trade books, which in today's marketplace include trade paperbacks.

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(paperbacks that are larger in size and generally more scholarly than mass-market paperbacks) and books for children. It is in the trade area of publishing that most of the marketing problems have existed and still exist, and unless there is a dramatic shift in the perceptions of publishers, these problems will continue to exist.

**Few Styles?**

Unlike the IBM PC or the Apple Microcomputer, each of which has two or three models and a limited number of peripherals, books come in many shapes, colors and sizes. R.R. Bowker, publisher of *Books in Print*, reports that in 1985 they expect approximately 660,000 different books to be listed as currently available. This inventory of titles in print marches ever upward. In 1980 there were 41,434 new titles published; in 1981 there were 48,793 more titles added to the number in print; and in 1983 there were 53,380, of which 42,236 were new titles. B. Dalton, the chain bookseller and a pioneer in using the computer to control inventories, estimates that its average trade bookstore in a shopping mall requires at least 25,000 different books in inventory to achieve optimum sales.

In addition to the complexity of the inventory, the unit prices of books are very low. The average price of a hardbound book in 1983 was $31.19; the average price for a book of fiction was $14.29, and for a children's book $9.73. The average retail price of trade books is too low to support an expensive consumer marketing system or a major investment in new technology.

In 1983, there were slightly more than 1 billion hardcover juvenile and trade paperback books sold in the United States, with net receipts by publishers of slightly less than 2 billion dollars. The entire industry—all 12,000 publishers of which 1600 published three or more titles in 1980—reported estimated sales of $9.7 billion in 1982. The sales of the entire industry approximate those of RCA, which reported sales of almost $9 billion.

It is possible, but hardly necessary, to develop more economic data to support the complexity of book publishing. There is a huge basic inventory of books; the retail prices are low; there are thousands of publishers (even though the industry volume is concentrated in the hands of a few publishers); the total dollars available for all purposes—payments to authors, manufacturing, personnel, advertising, marketing and physical distribution—in comparison with other consumer industries, are limited. Too much diversity and too few dollars is at the
Marketing of Books

heart of the dilemma facing those who are attempting to solve the problems of marketing books.

Ease of Description?

Charles Revson, describing the business of Revlon, Inc. said, "In the factory we make cosmetics; in the store we sell hope." While the benefits from books in general may be identified simply—delivery of information and entertainment, or using Revson-type terms like joy and hope—the task of describing the essence of the book is vastly more complex and ephemeral. From the earliest days of publishing, editors have sought to give salespeople a "handle"—one sentence which may sound like this: "A brilliantly written piece of fiction about the glorious days of the Civil War—reminiscent of Gone With the Wind." The editor and the advertising department then endeavor to compress one thousand pages of fiction into one hundred words or less for an advertisement, for a catalogue and for copy on the book jacket. Because of the difficulty in using words alone, the emphasis, in keeping with the Chinese proverb, is to make one picture worth a thousand words. The jacket is the centerpiece of the effort to convey the essence of the book. Yet when consumers were asked what influenced them in the selection of a book, only 29 percent said they were influenced to buy by "a description or synopsis of the book, by the jacket or by the cover." The dilemma that confronts publishers is that the best books are unique, original, and usually incapable of being explained in a few words by use of a "handle" or even by several hundred words in a catalogue. The thrill of discovery is a special benefit to be derived from books. Some artists, when asked to explain their paintings, say: "If I could explain it in words I would not have painted the picture." The author might say: "If I could adequately describe my book in a sentence I would not have written the entire book."

A Broad Spectrum of Users Who can be Reached Through the Media?

Approximately one-half of the United States population has read at least one book in the last six months. This is an encouraging but deceptive statistic. The heavy book readers—who comprise the market most likely to buy or borrow books—are those who read a book a week rather than one book in six months, and they account for only about 17 percent of the population. The heavy book reader—the 17 percent of the population that is the heart of the market—are females (69 percent),
predominantly white (89 percent) and generally younger than the total population. About one-half of the best readers have a high school education or less, while the other half completed high school. Three in ten completed college. Book readers are diverse, and because of this they form an expensive target to reach by general-circulation consumer-media advertising.

Publishers, other than those who sell books by direct mail or the romance paperback publishers, spend only three cents of every dollar received on consumer advertising—a paltry sum when compared to other consumer "products". It is the practice to exploit a book and author by means of guest television appearances and press interviews that are provided to the publisher without charge. Fortunately, book readers watch almost as much television as nonbook readers. This happy circumstance, and the special standing the book and the author have in American society, make a significant amount of advertising available at no cost through the television appearances of authors who are celebrities. However, the thousands of other authors who are not well known are left to their own devices—the books themselves.

As publishers have suspected, the major factor in consumer selection of a book is the subject matter. The second most important factor, as developed by surveys, is the recommendation of a friend or relative...the celebrated "word-of-mouth" advertising. Trade book publishing has survived because it has not been dependent upon vast expenditures of advertising dollars. The book itself, the author and the initial readers are the factors that create sales.

Universal, Simple, Effective, Economically Sound, Distribution?

Francis Howell, a senior Vice President of Ingram Book Company, in a paper prepared for publication, has described book marketing succinctly and graphically in two charts. Howell says:

Most items or goods manufactured in the United States are sold to the consumer through a distribution network of wholesalers and retailers. A wholesaler buys the product from the manufacturer, warehouses it in a strategically located facility and resells it to retail stores and dealers in the local area. Manufacturers seldom sell directly to the consumer. However, book publishers sell to anyone and everyone, including the wholesaler, retailer, school, library, and book club, as well as directly to the individual consumer. Rarely does one find a distribution system as archaic, confused, unreliable or complicated as that of the trade book publishing industry [italics mine].
Howell has developed a diagram that dramatizes the manner in which books are currently being sold to consumers in the United States (see figure 1).

Almost all trade booksellers buy directly from the publisher and supplement their purchases by reorders from a wholesaler. Howell has drawn a chart (shown as figure 2) which illustrates ten bookstores ordering directly from five publishers, and Howell remarks: "Imagine, if you will, enlarging this to 10,000 retailers and 1,000 publishers and the huge number of books involved.... To further complicate the matter, there is little standardization of policies among the publishers." Each has its own discount schedule, freight policy and other peculiarities of doing business with the retailer.15

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOLVING THE MARKETING DILEMMA

The Special Place of the Book

Commentators have recognized the fact that publishers do well at selecting books. There have been some low points but, in general, publishers receive at least a passing mark for the quality of books. Most publishers regard editorial quality as the most important ingredient in a publishing company and spare no expense to select good books, and to design and print them well. The American culture is also enriched by books translated from foreign languages into English. Nevertheless, almost all commentators agree that publishers fail at the marketing function. As early as 1929, O.H. Cheney, in a pioneering study developed for the National Association of Book Publishers, said: "The distribution system of the industry, as represented by its outlets, is unsystematized, underdeveloped, ineffective, unprofitable, and static."16

More than fifty years later, in 1980, John Tebbel, the eminent book publishing historian, said: "No other business puts out some 40,000 products on the market every year, each one of them different from the other, places them in retail outlets by the most haphazard means...and then agrees to accept all the books the retailer has bought which he hasn't been able to sell. These books are then either destroyed or remained...."17

In a 1984 discussion at the Library of Congress, Jacques Barzun, the distinguished writer and philosopher, said, "If cornflakes were sold like books nobody would eat breakfast."18 It could be asked: "Why the
Figure 1. Channels of Book Distribution
Source: Chart information and design by Francis Howell of Ingram Books, Nashville, Tennessee.
Figure 2. From Publisher Direct to Retailer

Source: Chart information and design by Francis Howell of Ingram Books, Nashville, Tennessee.
concern?" Newspaper and magazines flourish. Radio and television are
great entertainment and information media. The computer and the
video cassette will augment the education and entertainment from other
media. Why books? Lewis Coser and his colleagues have made the case
most effectively, saying: “Books are carriers and disseminators of ideas.
More than any other means of communication, they are the most
permanent, reasoned, and extensive repository of thoughts of civilized
man...The book trade is, in fact, both the guardian and constant creator
of our written culture.”

It is important to solve the marketing dilemma because:

1. Books have a special place in our society.
2. The growth of sophisticated retailers provides a new and effective
   way to reach the reader.
3. New aggressive wholesalers have developed.
4. Not solving the marketing problem contributes to a mass destruction
   of books that is a national disgrace.

The Coming Restructuring of Book Retailing

In recent years three major companies—each with little familiarity
with books—entered retail bookselling in the belief there was an oppor-
tunity for profit. The Dayton Hudson Co., a major owner of department
stores, created a chain of bookstores, B. Dalton Bookseller, and by 1983 it
had opened 732 stores, with a new store opening almost every week. The
Walden Book Company, a private company, was acquired by Carter
Hawley Hale Inc., another major department store chain, and was built
up to 887 stores by 1983. In 1984 they sold what was described as the
“jewel in their crown” to K-Mart, a discount chain which was already a
major book retailer. Dart Drug founded, financed and then took public
a group of discount bookstores—Crown Books—which as of September
1984 reported 173 stores in operation. Each one of these chains has plans
for expansion which should add 150 or more retail bookstores each
year.

The chains, unlike most of the independent retail bookstores, have
sophisticated techniques for monitoring the sales in their stores. Their
return of unsold books as a measure of ordering efficiency is about half
of the industry rate of returns. Ordering is largely done by the B. Dalton
computer “talking” to the publisher’s computer. Both B. Dalton and
Walden Book Co. have stores in every state, in the top American cities,
and in the suburbs. Their size enables them to use national magazines
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for extensive advertising every autumn, and they run book advertise-
ments in local newspapers almost on a daily basis.

Book sales have grown substantially—almost by half—from 1972
to 1977, and continue to grow. Paul D. Doebler, a respected economist,
predicts: "The pattern likely to dominate in the future is similar to the
record, game, toy, hobby industries: 20% to 25% share of the market will
be held by the four largest chains, 55% to 60% by all multi-store firms,
and 40% to 45% by single store independents." "

A concomitant to the growth of the chains will be a reorientation of
the independent bookstore. One lawsuit has been brought as a test by the
Northern California Booksellers Association, charging price discrimi-
nation by the publishers against the independent bookstores. There is
also a glimmer of hope that booksellers, large and small, will begin to
move to a more sophisticated marketing process. A trend to concentra-
tion may lead to the beginnings of meaningful marketing of books by
forcing the independents to seek competitive prices and to emulate the
techniques used by the chains.

The Emergence of the Wholesaler

In much the same way that "outsiders" moved into book retailing,
a certain large company believed there was a need that could only be
filled by a national book wholesaler primarily selling trade books to
bookstores. Ingram Industries, a diversified company, created the
Ingram Book Company, which energized the entire area of wholesaling
of books. Ingram pioneered an online inventory service which featured
weekly reports for booksellers on Ingram's book stock and accepted
online orders from its bookseller-customers' terminals. As an added
incentive for using the system, Ingram now guarantees an order will
leave its premises in twenty-four hours, and it has brought down its
price for the independent wholesaler by assessing a penalty on books
that are returned. Baker and Taylor, another major book wholesaler,
had its roots in the institutional and library markets, but it has kept pace
with Ingram. Together, these two firms provide the basic framework of
an alternative distribution for books that for the first time enables a
retailer to get books of all publishers economically and efficiently from
a single source.

The National Disgrace

Until the advent of the mass market in the early 1950s, there were
few publishers who allowed unsold books to be returned to the pub-
lisher for full credit, although some publishers allowed "exchanges" in the event of a publishing mistake. It is now an accepted practice, even in the sales of textbooks to college stores, that all books are returnable for full credit. Retailers and wholesalers have a full return privilege. Books that are not sold, for any reason at all, can be and are returned at will. The only burden assessed by most hardcover publishers is that freight on the "returned books" must be paid by the customer. However, since paperback books are returned by the hundreds of millions, at publisher expense, publishers decided that the entire paperback book need not be returned—only the front cover showing the retail price. The paperback retailer or wholesaler is honor bound to destroy the body of the book. Should he decide that, even without a cover, the book had worth, and endeavored to sell the coverless paperback book, he would be prosecuted by the publisher and held liable for conversion of the publisher's property.

Returned hardcover books have a more pleasant fate. Some of them are sold to wholesalers who specialize in these returns, called remainders. They then follow the same distribution path as new books, but at retail prices generally one-half the original price. They are resold by the remainder wholesaler to the same retail outlets that returned them—but now at a much lower price. These books are displayed on bargain tables in bookstores and listed in catalogues of bargain books. In some instances these "unsalable" books become so successful at the new lower retail price that they are kept in print for years.

For trade books (adult fiction and nonfiction) the 1982 data collected from twenty-seven publishers and representatives of the industry indicated that about one out of every four books shipped to customers is returned. Current interim reports issued by the American Association of Publishers show that the returns in 1984 are remaining at this level. Assuming shipments of 1 billion units in 1984, this would mean that about 250 million hardcover books would be returned from retailers and wholesalers to publishers—some to be recycled to the remainder merchants and some to be destroyed. Aside from the needless expense, consider the intellectual waste and the economic inefficiency!

There is at least some saving grace in the resale of hardcover books; there is little or no salvage in the mass market paperback publishing. The paperback publisher requires, except for an infinitesimally small number of "classic" books, a certificate of destruction of the paperback books. Not since the days of Hitler and Kristallnacht has there been such a mass destruction of knowledge—and this goes on every day in America, in full daylight, not only with the knowledge and concurrence of
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those who publish and sell books and of our educators, but according to the laws of our government.

In 1982, one out of three paperback books was "returned," i.e., destroyed, by a retailer or wholesaler. Current data indicates that the trend was the same in 1984. Just as with hardcover books, it is expected that at least 250 million paperback books were destroyed in 1984. The cost to the publisher to manufacture these books is estimated to be more than $50 million. The intellectual and societal loss cannot be estimated.

This mindless, needless destruction of intellectual property is not necessary; and if one accepts the fact that there is inefficiency in any system, the number of returns could at least be reduced with a better system. Brave individual efforts by publishers to make it economically burdensome to return books have failed to start a trend. The New American Library, a paperback publisher of note, pioneered such an effort and still continues its successful policy of rewarding the wholesalers and retailers for efficient sales. Not one paperback publisher, large or small, followed suit. A few small hardcover publishers did adapt the New American Library system to their own lines, but not one of the major paperback publishers was willing to follow suit. And where voluntary action has failed and there is a national purpose to be served, it would seem imperative for the government to step in.

Is Change Likely?

While there are many positive forces that might accelerate a solution to this "200-Year-Old-Bottleneck," such as the growth of sophisticated retailers of books, the impetus for change generated by competition between the independent and chain retailers, and the acceptance of the wholesaler as a logical single source, publishers in a recent study conducted by the Book Industry Study Group are pessimistic that there will be any immediate change.

The Book Industry Study Group engaged Arthur Andersen & Co., which used the Delphi survey technique for "identifying and assessing problems and opportunities" in the movement of books from the publisher to the retailer. The authors of the survey report that:

In the last few years the industry has seen the start of innovation in some elements of the distribution process. Examples include widespread use of the ten-year-old uniform numbering scheme, transaction standards, upgraded data processing capabilities, combined shipments, and altered discount and return policies. In most cases,
these new practices are being adopted slowly, even after considerable effort. The cost and service pressures on physical distribution are intensifying faster than the industry's capacity to respond.

In the survey, the publishers echoed the criticisms of the distribution systems made by Cheney, Tebbel, and Barzun. But when asked to answer the question: "What are the chances that the segment (publisher, wholesaler, bookseller, librarian, manufacturer) needing to change will change?" the consensus was that: "Prospects for innovation on the part of the publishing segment are appraised as only fair by panels representing publishers and their customers." Given this attitude, it appears that without other actions to motivate publishers, wholesalers and retailers to change dramatically, there will be little or no progress, and the distinguished commentators will once again say that distribution does not work.

A National Problem of Governmental Concern

Given the physical, financial, and intellectual waste in the destruction of about 30 percent of all books published in the United States, there is a role for government. Recently, reacting to the complaints of the airplane traveler and attempting to avoid the hazards of crowded skies at airports during the most popular hours for arrivals and departures, the FAA sought and obtained antitrust immunity from the Justice Department to enable competing airlines to negotiate takeoff and landing times without fear of being held liable by the Justice Department for a conspiracy in restraint of trade.

Left to their own devices, the evidence indicates that publishers would not seek out solutions to the marketing problems or the return problem. Publishers have an overwhelming faith in the book as its own marketing mechanism. Publishers point to books such as One Writer's Beginnings by Eudora Welty, published by Harvard University Press, which as of 30 September 1984 had appeared on The New York Times "Best Seller List" for thirty weeks. They also point to a nonfiction book, Eat to Win, published by Rawson Publishers, a husband-and-wife team, which headed its segment of The New York Times "Best Seller List" for twenty-seven weeks and was sold to a paperback publisher for a reported $1.2 million. Many publishers cite instances like these to support their view that the book is more important than the distribution because Harvard University Press, a scholarly publisher with a tiny marketing staff, was able to catapult one modest book by a "regional" writer into an outstanding best seller. Rawson distributed to the trade through
Charles Scribner's Sons, and thus without its own marketing staff was able to market a nutrition book for athletes into best-seller status and to conduct, without a subsidiary rights department, a paperback auction that brought them and the author a small fortune. "Why worry about marketing?" the publishing cynics say. "All you need are good books. The right book will reach its audience by word-of-mouth, and if it has Spartan-like qualities, the book will survive and prosper."

The publishers maintain that time is more advantageously spent on the intellectually stimulating task of finding the "right" books rather than trying to reform a distribution mechanism that has not functioned for decades and is unlikely to function efficiently in the future. Agreeing with the Book Industry Study Group, the consensus is that distribution changes are unlikely.33

Despite the publishers' antipathy to marketing reforms, preservation of intellectual property is a matter of national concern. It is at least as important as inconvenience to airline passengers or safety in the skies over airports. It would be possible for the Department of Commerce—concerned with the improvement of business methods—to involve the Justice Department, the Federal Trade Commission, the Internal Revenue Service, the Library of Congress, the Postal Service, and other branches of the government interested in the fullest exploitation of our publishing resources to invite all interested parties—authors, publishers, retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers—to develop a program to make the marketing and distribution of books at least minimally effective.

If one assumes that the marketing of books is a government concern and that a "summit meeting" is needed, one method of determining the efficacy of such a solution is to visualize a hypothetical meeting. Select a hypothetical host, list possible attendees, and set a probable agenda. For purposes of this exercise, a hypothetical document covering these areas, which would be distributed to the attendees, might look like this:

HOST: DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE IN ATTENDANCE

Representing the Government
Mr. XXX, from the office of the President
Members of the House of Representatives and Senate
Staffs of the Justice Department and Federal Trade Commission
The staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation
The Commissioner of Internal Revenue

FALL 1984
The Postmaster General
The Director, Small Business Administration
Librarian of Congress
Other government officials as required

Representing the Publishing Industry
Publishers (large, middle-sized, small; trade [hardcover], paperbacks [mass market], text, scientific)
Booksellers (chains and independents)
Book and Magazine Wholesalers
Librarians
Book Manufacturers, Distributors
Book Industry Study Group
Others interested in the marketing of books

Representing the Public
Press: as wide a representation as possible

Items to be Discussed:
1. Standardized book identification in a machine-readable form
2. Standard Address Number
3. Revision of federal tax code
4. Reshaping of distribution system
5. Revised postal rates
6. Other business

The list of attendees demonstrates the involvement of many branches of government in the publishing process, beginning with the occupant of the Oval Office of the White House. As substantive agenda items are discussed later in this article, the role of the Congress and the agencies will become clearer. A sine qua non of such a meeting would be the assurance by the Justice Department and the Federal Trade Commission that all participants in this meeting would receive broad immunity from prosecution should matters discussed indicate possible violation of present federal laws.

The hypothetical agenda is representative and tentative and not all-inclusive. The matters requiring discussion range from intricate technical problems requiring the skills of experts to matters of policy requiring the participation of high level representatives of government and business. The suggested agenda would dictate the format, requiring small well-qualified working groups of experts to report to the major determining body. Even the five points listed (and it is likely the list
would be doubled before the conference convened) would require extensive discussion, making this hypothetical conference one that would extend over a long period, possibly a year or more, with general meetings once or twice a month. On reaching agreement, the only possible enforcement device would be voluntary cooperation, augmented where possible by self-interest, tax incentives, and perhaps even a patriotic desire to see a major growth in book reading in the United States. To appreciate this hypothetical conference, it is thus important to attempt to discuss in moderate detail the agenda items, visualizing what might transpire on a substantive basis.

Item No.1 - Machine-Readable ISBN

An identification code in machine-readable form, such as the International Standard Book Number, is needed because of the complex nature of the industry. Book publishing is faced with a cumulative inventory of 660,000 items growing at the rate of more than 50,000 new books a year, with low retail prices, wasteful distribution, and marginal profits. This is a classic case in which the computer can be used to manage masses of data from which decisions can be made. As a beginning, the industry might decide to print a code on the jacket or cover of every hardcover and trade paperback book, which can be read by an optical scanning device. Any reader who has shopped in a supermarket has seen these “machine-readable codes.” They are the bar codes printed on all packages and cans sold in supermarkets and read by a device at the check-out counter. This code would contain significant data concerning the book, such as title, price, publisher, and category.

The industry has made a start. The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) a ten-digit code, is in general use. However, for the most part, only the paperback publisher now prints the ISBN and other relevant data on the cover of the book in machine-readable form. The paperback publishers resisted placing the code on the book cover for many years on aesthetic grounds, until the supermarket owners told them either to do this or else paperback books would no longer be sold in supermarkets. The capturing of ISBN data by a scanning device is deemed to be so valuable to the major bookselling chains such as B. Dalton and Walden Book Company that they place their own “product” identification stickers on each book by hand. B. Dalton and Walden Book Co. capture data to develop statistics on rate-of-sale of individual books, which helps book buyers decide on the necessity for a reorder. These data advise the buyers of the kinds of books required for each store to achieve maximum sale. By use of this information, most
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chains have reduced returns to publishers to about one-half the industry averages. The chain bookstores have also used these basic data to create computer systems by which orders are transmitted from the chain headquarter's computer to the publisher's computer without a hard copy, and to generate accounting data. There is consensus that the capture and use of the machine-readable codes has helped these chains achieve a higher than average level of profitability. With an industry-wide agreement on "product" identification, and the installation of systems to read and manipulate these data, publishers and retailers would improve in profitability and provide better service to customers.

Item No.2—Standard Address Number

The Standard Address Number (SAN) is designed to identify each participant in book marketing. Given the number of individual locations of bookstores and libraries and the divisions within publishing conglomerates, it is important that every publisher be identified by a Standard Address Number (SAN), so that when a bookseller addresses an order to a publisher it reaches the publisher for whom it is intended. It is also of equal importance that when a book order is shipped to a specific bookstore it arrives at that bookstore and not another branch of the same chain in that city. For example, the use of the SAN would preclude books ordered by the Stanford University Book Store on the campus from being shipped to another university bookstore on the campus, or the Stanford library, or the Stanford Book Store in downtown Palo Alto.

The SAN is essential to the implementation of consolidated shipping and automated book ordering. Some time ago, a valiant effort was made to provide consolidated freight service to bookstores and demonstrated major economies. Bookstores consigned their orders from various publishers to a single freight consolidating point, which held these orders until there was sufficient weight assembled to qualify for the lowest freight rate.

A freight consolidation service called ZIP-SAN, started in 1983, performed effectively, but ceased operations within six months because most publishers had not coded their accounts with a SAN, and the cost to ZIP-SAN to look up Standard Address Numbers or to update publishers' records was prohibitive.

Freight costs are a make-or-break item in a bookstore's profitability. This was dramatically illustrated when the oil crisis suddenly increased book freight rates and forced many hardcover publishers to institute a freight pass-through. If publishers and booksellers used the
SAN, it would be possible to consolidate shipments using regional depots and begin the reform of the present inefficient system of physical distribution.

**Item No.3-Revision of the Federal Tax Code**

Tax incentives have been used to encourage businesses to expand their role in society for the public good. Prior to the Supreme Court decision in the Thor Power Tool Case, publishers could evaluate their book inventories and make a judgment as to the salability of the books in the inventory. If publishers believed that some part of their inventory might be used in the future and the remaining portion would not be sold, publishers were allowed by some IRS districts to reduce the value of "unsalable" inventory without having to destroy the books. Under this practice, publishers kept many books in stock where the demand was modest. After the Thor Power Tool decision by the Supreme Court, the IRS required that publishers destroy books or remainder them if they intended to take a tax deduction. Immediately thereafter, publishers began a major destruction of slow-selling hardcover scientific and professional books, putting many valuable books out of print forever.

To stop this madness a bill was introduced in the Senate to enable publishers to deduct for slow-selling stock without having to destroy the books. When it appeared that the bill might pass, Senator Proxmire, at the eleventh hour, killed the bill—and the bill has never been revived. Publishers, in order to get tax relief, now destroy books that otherwise might be retained.

The 250 million returned paperback books that are now being destroyed by wholesalers and retailers are costed out by publishers in accordance with normal accounting principles. A tax deduction equivalent to the production costs is allowed. Paperback publishers who have been beset by illegal sales of the coverless books fear any secondary use of their books, and continue to make certain that the body of the book is destroyed when covers are returned for credit.

Using the same logic that provided tax incentives to encourage businesses to create opportunities in "enterprise zones" (economically depressed areas), at this hypothetical meeting the IRS should consider a tax incentive that would enable paperback returns to be recycled rather than destroyed. The customer, or a trusted intermediary, could place a special marking on the covers, and books could be donated to public and not-for-profit organizations, removing them from the normal stream of commerce. Assuming the average retail price of a paperback book at three dollars a copy, the 250 million returns each year could provide a
charitable contribution at retail of $750 million if books were contributed and not destroyed. The following lists some of the tough issues which might be discussed and resolved in this hypothetical meeting of publishers, the IRS, other government officials, and representatives of the Congress if it were ever to take place:

1. What marking can be developed to identify books to prevent these books finding their way back to the publishers a second time?
2. How are the books to be selected and by whom?
3. What organizations are really unable to purchase books—since publishers would be unwilling to reduce their present sales to public institutions that might be able to purchase books if public funds were appropriated?
4. What is a fair tax incentive for the publisher who takes the risk that these books, despite the marking device, might be returned?

It would be a milestone in government-industry cooperation if by the use of tax incentives publishers could be encouraged to keep slow-selling books in print longer, and if a considerable portion of 250 million paperback books could be used rather than destroyed.

*Item No. 4—Reshaping the Distribution System*

In most systems of marketing consumer goods, manufacturers make an election as to how they will distribute their merchandise. For example, some of the typical patterns range from a distribution system that is direct from the manufacturer to a retailer (e.g., Calvin Klein jeans), or from the manufacturer to the consumer by door-to-door salespersons (e.g., Avon or Fuller Brush), or a wholesaler who sells only one manufacturer’s product (e.g., beer and automobiles), or a regional wholesaler who sells products of competing manufacturers in the same industry (tobacco and magazine wholesalers). It is rare that a manufacturer uses all these means to distribute the same consumer “product.” It is possible for a consumer to buy the same book from a book club, the publisher, by mail, or from a bookstore. The retailer, in some instances, can buy the same book from a book wholesaler, a magazine wholesaler or direct from the publisher. This is marketing anarchy. It would not be unreasonable to believe that some of the wasteful book returns result from a retailer ordering the same book from the publisher and one or more wholesalers, to insure that at least one source delivers his order to enable him to keep bestselling books in stock.

At the same time, some booksellers claim price discrimination. The present lawsuit brought by the Northern California Booksellers Associ-
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ation claims that publishers extend preferential prices to chain booksellers. A major task force of publishers, wholesalers and retailers (chain store and independents), with the help of the FTC, should attempt to suggest a method to simplify the distribution structure. Once simplified, there should be legally supportable savings that might be passed on properly to businesses involved in bringing the book to the customer. There are savings to the publisher that could be measured. There is a cost saving in reducing returns. There are cost savings involved in receiving orders directly on a computer-to-computer basis. A list of potential changes in practice can be developed, and a method developed to assign dollar values so that those who participate in a reformed marketing system benefit from the cost savings realized.

The reason, many believe, that there has not been such an investigation, or a major overhaul of the marketing systems and a new approach to pricing of books to wholesalers, chain retailers and independent retailers, is the vulnerability of the publisher. The pricing and distribution structure, which has been subject to review on several occasions by the Federal Trade Commission, could be attacked. There is a body of thought that holds it is better to patch and defend the existing system rather than either risk careful scrutiny by the Federal Trade Commission, or create a new system with appropriate discounts for services rendered at each level. Those who defend the status quo believe that market forces will, eventually, solve the problem. These are the traditional arguments and could be accepted if the cost to the industry were acceptable. However, waiting for an evolutionary solution would be expensive and protracted.

Item No.5—Revised Postal Rates

In Benjamin Franklin's day the post office was considered a liberating force because it made possible a wider dissemination of information and culture. In recent years, the Postal Commission, reacting to the pressure from Congress, has increased postal rates on a regular basis, largely eroding the preferential rates for books. Even with rate increases, postal services have deteriorated so that now it costs almost $10 to buy the overnight service that was normally expected from the best postal system in the world. An inexpensive postal rate for books is essential to promote reading, because book post is the most prevalent method of delivering crucial small quantities to libraries and bookstores. In order to meet these needs, in addition to a general lowering of rates there should be a special bargain postal rate at the $1.50 or $2 level available for overnight delivery of a book. This would enable a retailer to deliver a
special-order book to a customer on an expedited basis, making a larger share of the 500,000 books in print available.

**Item No.6—Other Items**

An article on marketing has its limit, and this article has arrived at this point. It is to be hoped that the agenda of this hypothetical meeting has been set forth in sufficient detail for the reader to appreciate the business aspects of the problem and to add “other items.” The agenda terms discussed previously are reformations of trade practices and uses of government proper for the general good. The other items discussed must include the promotion of reading books. The economics to be realized from new business initiatives will be hollow victories if the illiterates are not taught how to read. Nor will there be any real benefits if those who now read should stop reading books.

It will never be possible, given the 660,000 titles in print, the more than 50,000 new books released each year, the modest size and great diversity of the audience, and the limited size of the entire industry, to create a slick, snappy 100-percent-effective distribution system.

Given the present national administration’s move toward deregulation of industries, simplification of taxes, and reduction of appropriations devoted to arts and culture, the cynics would say that prospects for action are unlikely. Given the publishers’, authors’, and booksellers’ predilections to protect freedom of expression, the cynics also would say that a groundswell of support from the book community for government intervention seems unlikely.

Nevertheless, this is a time for the people of the United States, as represented by its government, to prove the cynics wrong. It is possible to have an effective national system of marketing of books, and this can be achieved in the decade of the 1980s if there is a cultural coalition of the people of the book—authors, publishers, wholesalers, librarians, and readers—and they demand these reforms.

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The Role of Promotion in the Book Publishing Process

ESTHER MARGOLIS

When I address students in publishing workshops on the role of promotion, advertising, and publicity in the book publishing process, I ask them to write down the title of one book they have read in the previous year—one they have chosen at leisure, not one required for school or business. Then I ask them to try and remember the reason they chose to read that particular book, that is, what stimulated them to buy or borrow it. Then I tell them that I will guess that reason, that I think it likely they had responded to one or a combination of these nine stimuli:

1. An author interview, talk or lecture. For example, Barbara Tuchman interviewed on the “Today Show” or Coretta Scott King speaking at an American Library Association breakfast or Norman Cousins lecturing at a university may have triggered an interest in reading their works.

2. A news or feature story. The Olympics coverage may have stimulated interest in books on certain athletes or by sports medicine experts, while news reporting of runner James Fixx’s sudden heart attack may have led readers to books on health and aerobic fitness.

3. A book excerpt. Sections of Toni Morrison’s or Bob Woodward’s new book may have appeared in Esquire or the Washington Post, or perhaps in one of the airlines magazines, and intrigued the reader enough to want to read the entire work.

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4. **Movie or television presentation.** The television presentation of *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* or Alvin Toffler's *The Third Wave*, or the viewing of a feature film like *Gandhi*, *Ragtime*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, or *Sophie's Choice*, stimulated you to want to read the literary works on which these films were based or derived.

5. **Advertising.** A particular print advertisement or radio or television commercial caught your attention, perhaps reminding you that the new book by your favorite author was now in the bookstores, or that a book critic you respect raved about a writer whom you had not yet read. For example, you are a Dick Francis fan and you chose to read his latest novel as soon as you saw the ad for it announced in your local paper, or you read Maxine Hong Kingston's first book when you saw the quote drawn from the rave notice the book received from John Leonard in *The New York Times*.

6. **Direct response.** A flyer or phone call from an association, book club or political, social or professional group directed your attention to a book on a favorite subject like bridge, bird watching, China, colonial history, art collecting, tennis, cats, or politics.

7. **Book browsing.** While browsing in a bookstore or library, you became intrigued by a book jacket, cover or merchandising display. You picked up the book, got a “feel” for the book, and decided you would like to read it or give it as a gift.

8. **A book review.** A review may have appeared in a national publication like *The New York Times Book Review*, *McCall's* Magazine, a professional publication like *Library Journal*, or *Booklist*, or in a local newspaper, or a review may have been given by a radio or television commentator.

9. **Word-of-mouth.** Somebody you know and respect (a relative, teacher, librarian, friend, or colleague) said: "Read it, you'll like it."

When I finish going through these nine points with their various and ever-changing examples, I find that the last point—word-of-mouth—is always the most common reason given for reading a particular book. Book reviews are a distant second. And more often than not the person who first recommended the book chose it because of word of mouth as well. If one accepts that this is the most effective method to bring books to a reader's attention, then the ultimate question for anyone studying the promotion and marketing of books has to be: How does the word get started, when does it get started, and by whom is it started? Indeed, can it be built?
From the point of view of someone who has been specializing in the promotion and marketing of books for over twenty years, I believe word-of-mouth can be nurtured and built and that the other eight stimuli mentioned earlier are all aspects of that building process. In practice, word-of-mouth represents an evolving chain of communication, one that links the book to an enthusiastic reader, and one which often begins a year or two or more before the book is published, when it may be just an idea, a proposal, an outline, or a draft manuscript.

It usually starts when the author and/or his representative present the book idea to the editor who will acquire it for the publishing house. This is where the buzz may begin since it is at this point that the book acquires its first in-house advocate. The editor passes the word on to other “word passers” involved in the publishing process, including the sales, promotion, publicity, advertising, and subsidiary rights people—i.e., the marketers and the licensers—who will communicate outside the publishing house to the trade and to the public using an assortment of communications techniques. In this way word-of-mouth rolls out in ever-widening circles from within the publishing house itself, to the publishing trade (booksellers and librarians), next to the media (especially to book review editors), to special-interest groups and/or influential individuals, and finally to the consumer or reader who will be the ultimate judge of the book’s continuing or lasting life in the marketplace. These impressions and enthusiasms are passed on either in casual conversation or in methodical, planned (and often paid for) communications by the various promotion and marketing professionals employed to create and execute the campaigns on behalf of the books and authors.

Depending on the company’s structure and size, any number of professionals can be charged with the responsibility of “doing” something to stimulate attention for a book. With the exception of licensing of book excerpts and/or film rights, which are generally the purview of the author’s agent or the publisher’s subsidiary rights department, the promotion professionals are the ones who try to create any one of the other eight stimuli mentioned at the outset of this article. They usually function as part of a promotion department with their budget for doing things based on a percentage of sales volume computed either by title or by the total list. If computed by title, standard publishing practice is to set the promotion budget based on approximately 10 percent of the anticipated gross sales. For example, if a book is priced at $10 and sold at an average discount of 50 percent, the gross sales to the publisher will be $5 for each copy sold. If the publisher estimates selling 10,000 copies of
this title, the publisher can expect gross sales of $50,000. Therefore, if it were using the standard 10 percent practice, it would allot a promotion budget of $5000 to this title. Budgets are not cast in stone, however, and publishers normally review them periodically, especially during the period when the book begins to establish itself in the marketplace. Anyone who has been involved in publishing over the years has dozens of examples of books that never lived up to their sales expectations (even after publishers poured many promotion dollars into their launching), or, more happily, those that performed way beyond the initial expectations (and had their promotion budgets accordingly adjusted upward).

The various specialties involved in these promotion efforts are sales and direct mail promotion, advertising, publicity, school, college, library, and professional promotion, and very often whatever is left over falls into the category of "special promotion." The individuals who practice these specialties have varying interests and talents. They are artists, copywriters, production and traffic managers, publicists, media specialists, event planners, secretaries, administrators, and clerks. Their effectiveness depends not only on their talent or the budget, but also on their relationship with the rest of the people in the publishing process including the author. Good promotion people are spotters and users—in a positive sense of course. They are as thrilled about spotting someone else's good idea and putting it to work (giving credit where it is due, naturally) as they are about creating one themselves. They are conveyers of ideas and information. They are convincers. They are, above all, communicators. The difference among the various promotion specialists lies mainly in whom they communicate with and how they get it done.

Sales promotion specialists assist the sales force to communicate to the buyers known as the "trade," that is, the wholesalers, jobbers, chain stores, book and nonbook retailers, as well as to individual, targeted purchasers through direct mail. They traditionally prepare much print material—catalogs, order forms, announcement flyers, and direct mail brochures for mailings. Also, since many companies are now using audio- and videocassettes and special filmed presentations, sales promotion specialists create for other types of media as well (they have also been known to promote with aprons, shopping bags, hockey pucks, baseball bats, jellybeans, buttons, or magic pencils). They set up booths and programs at various national and regional sales conventions and professional meetings. To influence the book browser, sales promotion specialists may prepare merchandising display materials such as posters and counter units when they are part of a book's campaign. To make use
of other promoters' budgets, they may work with movie companies on promotional tie-ins, or with department store event-planners on an author appearance or demonstration.

Educational promotion specialists also communicate to buyers, but they are buyers for schools, colleges and libraries (rather than the retail trade). Often, they are also charged with communication to individual professional purchasers, specifically, the educator and librarian. They create flyers, catalogs, newsletters, teacher's guides, posters, audio-cassettes, or other materials which they distribute by direct mail or at conventions and meetings where they set up publishers' booths and schedule promotional events and social gatherings.

Advertising is a technique of communication where you have to pay for what you say. It is the most expensive form of promotion, which is why many books do not get advertising from publishers in the style in which the author would like the publisher to become accustomed. Most trade advertising goes to the professional publications like Publishers Weekly and Library Journal. Most consumer book advertising is in the print media although radio is being used more and more, especially when a book's market can be targeted. National television is rarely used. Often advertising budgets are spent on a "coop" basis in conjunction with retailers. Sometimes monies are allotted to direct-response advertising in print, radio or television, rather than purely to display advertising. Consumer advertising is used: (1) after a book is launched, (2) once it is well reviewed (so quotes can be promoted), (3) to quickly communicate the availability of a new book by an established author with a following eagerly awaiting news of his or her latest work, or (4) when a book starts to take off in sales. The advertising message will be repeated as frequently as the budget will allow.

Then there are the publicists, who are the people who thrive on communication. Their success comes from making the connection between the book and the media contact—kindling the interest of newspaper reporters, gossip columnists, book reviewers, television or radio producers, magazine editors, or any other persons who have access to a communications outlet—which means gaining access to the public. However a publicist manages to interest a contact, whether in conversation over lunch, cocktails, over the phone, or by letter, mailgram, press release, or carrier pigeon, his or her part in the marketing process is quite clear: A publicist's function is to make the book known through all available media sources without paying for the time or space given to the book or author. Without question this is the least expensive promo-
tion support in launching a new book, author or publishing program, and it can be the most potent.

What all these combined people and activities do is to help to get the book noticed, to get it sold and into the hands of the reader, to get word out, to create the "word-of-mouth." Word-of-mouth, as I mentioned earlier, is the most common reason why people read the books they do. How effectively and imaginatively the promotion team does its job may prove the difference between a book being "published"—that is, becoming publicly known, in the dictionary definition of the word—or "privished," which is how one marketing colleague of mine, Lillian Friedman, describes those books which see little of the public eye. However, if there is one thing that just about everyone in the business agrees on, for a new book to make it, it helps to have some luck. With some exceptions (the obvious "big money, big author" bestsellers), the business does not generate the kind of sales—ergo, the kind of promotion budgets—that can afford heavy or sometimes even adequate promotion expenditures. For most books, book people have to try and get a lot of communications mileage with relatively modest resources, which is why they rely heavily on personal energy and on networking with the various professionals who love books—especially librarians and booksellers and book reviewers. Fortunately there are booklovers of all kinds everywhere and many times they become the book's foremost and most effective promoters.

One of the most popular "building word-of-mouth" techniques draws on that potential. It involves sampling portions of the book or manuscript, even the entire work, in advance of publication. Obviously one has to be very selective when choosing the book for this kind of target preview. The first time it was employed in a major way was with Frederick Forsythe's thrilling first novel, Day of the Jackal. The manuscript was acquired by Viking in 1970 and soon after by Bantam for paperback. In planning the Viking launch the two houses worked together in plotting the promotion strategy, which was to be focused on "word-of-mouth." Excitement about the book was already being passed along by in-house readers of the manuscript. To spread the word further, the two publicity departments devised a plan to circulate 2500 advance-reading paperback copies of the book months before its hardcover publication. The targets were people who were sociable, influential and good talkers. A mailing list was built (at Bantam it was affectionately titled "the big-mouth list") featuring media people, opinion-makers, restaurateurs, producers, buyers, publicists, wholesalers, booksellers, librarians, relatives, politicians, stewardesses, movie
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stars, columnists, agents, and other potentially powerful word passers. By publication date the book had become one of the most talked about new novels of the year. Eight years and many successful sampling campaigns later, the quality of Hank Searles’s exciting Jaws 2 novel, based on characters in Peter Benchley’s Jaws, inspired an unusual variation of the technique. Although the novel had been commissioned as a promotional tie-in for release with the film in June 1978, Bantam was so impressed with Searles’s manuscript that it convinced Universal Pictures to allow the book to be published three months before the film’s release so that an extensive publicity effort could be made independent of the film. In order to generate word-of-mouth, 25,000 advance-reading copies were distributed to sales and publicity lists and to respondents of a New York Times Book Review advertisement—the first time a free book offer had been made to the general public. In fact, the ad itself was publicized, resulting in its appearance on the “Today” show. Also, the first chapter of the book was so compelling that it was placed in the back of 1.1 million copies of other Bantam paperbacks and in addition it was sent on a “Chapter One Tour”; that is, the first chapter was published in thirty-eight Sunday newspapers including the Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, LA Times, and New York Post—two weeks before the book went on sale. The results were tremendous. Jaws 2 became a bestseller ten weeks before the film opened. In fact, the book’s success became such a marketing advantage for the movie that the technique of advance publication for books based on original scripts has become one of the strategies now commonly considered in early campaign planning of movie tie-ins.

Sampling can be effective for books other than those blessed with six-figure best-seller budgets. For example, reader attention for The Female Stress Syndrome by Dr. Georgia Witkin-Lanoil, published by Newmarket in March 1984, was helped enormously by the excerpts published in such magazines as Health, Working Mother, Vogue, Harper’s Bazaar, Cosmopolitan, and Modern Bride. This kind of sampling is not only cost free, but it brings in licensing revenue. And it allowed the promotion budget to be applied totally to a publicity tour for a very promotable author as well as to advertising.

Word-of-mouth can also be created by drawing on the strengths of other interest groups, as with a tie-in to a motion picture like Gandhi. When Newmarket published its Richard Attenborough books, The Words of Gandhi and Gandhi, A Pictorial Biography, with Gerald Gold, the promotion effort was centered on generating bookstore and library displays. A budget was allotted for creating a distribution net-
work to make maximum use of the Columbia Pictures merchandising materials (which included posters, educational teacher's guides, buttons, bookmarks, photos, audio-cassettes, and many other kinds of materials) as well as arranging a series of advance screenings of the film to build up word-of-mouth for it. Newmarket's marketing strategy was that the film was the most effective selling tool for the books so the tie-in to the film was made as strongly as possible. And it served Columbia's purposes as well since it delivered a constituency of enthusiastic booksellers, librarians and publishing "big-mouths" for a film which needed tremendous word-of-mouth to overcome initial lack of interest from the public.

These are just a few examples of books that, when published, were supported by energetic promotional efforts concentrated on building word-of-mouth. Although these kinds of campaigns help a book become established, there are many variations to the approach. The point is to make the connection between the book and the reader and between the publisher and the public. The challenge to the book promoter and book marketer is to try to recognize the values inherent in each book property and to devise a way to communicate those values to the maximum number of book purchasers and readers. Fortunately for authors and publishers, good books have a lot of friends who enjoy helping a book reach its readers. Often these friends become the best promoters of all.
AT THIS POINT IN TIME, as they used to say in the Watergate hearings, education for publishing is about where journalism education was in the earlier years of this century. Whether it will go much farther depends on a number of unpredictable circumstances, and in a business where the only certainties are the uncertainties, it would be frivolous to make any solemn forecasts.

Who would have believed, for instance, when the first journalism courses were introduced at New York University (NYU) and Columbia, Missouri, about 1909 (the dates and order of precedence are not historically clear) that they would proliferate into hundreds of undergraduate and graduate programs in universities and colleges all over America and abroad as well? When Joseph Pulitzer first proposed educating journalists in 1904, and offered Columbia University the honor of pioneering, President Nicholas Murray Butler scorned him, even though it meant a $2 million gift. He believed the academic waters would be irretrievably polluted by sanctifying journalism as a legitimate discipline.

The exchange between them became so acrimonious that it was not until 1912, a year after the publisher's death, that Butler could bring himself to accept Pulitzer's Graduate School of Journalism which has since become one of the most prestigious divisions of the university and whose graduates read like a who's who of journalism. Yet there are distinguished academics at Columbia who still regard it as an unwanted

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stepchild, and during the gloomy economic days of the 1970s, would have been willing to abandon it in the interests of economy.

Journalism education had to fight for academic recognition everywhere, first working itself free from the speech and English departments to which many programs were attached, until the invention of "mass communications" introduced the sociology of journalism to the curriculum, bringing with it grants, publication and a certain amount of respectability in the larger schools. In some places, however, it is still viewed with a tolerance bordering on contempt.

Education for journalism has had an even more difficult time in the profession itself. It was a formidable task to convince the self-taught and the untaught that a graduate of a journalism school could possibly know anything more than the lowliest cub. Only on-the-job training in the manner prescribed more than a century before was considered legitimate. The attitude persists today among some unreconstructed conservatives. But the media are now so populated by journalism graduates, from the top down, that a professional degree, while not often considered essential, is preferred more frequently than not, other things being equal.

In the now rapidly growing field of publishing education, the obstacles have been substantially the same. At the universities it has had to come in through the academic back door of the continuing education departments, the lucrative but often unjustifiably disdained stepchildren of the academy—these and the summer programs. Together they have carried most of the burden. As recently as 1958, when it was proposed to establish the first graduate degree in publishing anywhere (a step as revolutionary as Pulitzer's) at New York University, this writer, as first director, found that the only graduate faculty willing to accept the program was the School of Education, and even then the M.S. degree had to be in education, not book publishing. Furthermore, it must be called an "institute"; the notion that it might legitimately be called a "school," as Pulitzer's had been, was greeted as the kind of lunacy to be expected from people who were little better than journalists—a breed generally scorned.

There was considerable resistance in the publishing business, too, from the beginning and on the same grounds. The opposition was possibly even greater, since trade publishing jobs, at least, were so badly defined. How did one become an editor? What were publishers looking for when they hired someone? As in virtually every other aspect of the business, there were hundreds of answers and no agreement. It was, as
Education for Publishing

Samuel Vaughan, Doubleday's great editor, defined it, an "accidental profession."

Nevertheless, unlike the newspaper publishers, it was the heads of publishing houses and their organizations which were responsible for establishing education in their field. (Pulitzer had been an exception.) Again the origins are historically misty, but it seems likely that Kenneth McCormick, perhaps the most notable of editors over a half-century, was the first to lecture on the subject at NYU, leading to the establishment there in 1943 of a course title, "The Practice of Book Publishing," a survey of publishing practices much like those courses taught today. The 1943 course was sponsored by the Book Publishers Bureau, one of the several forerunners of the present Association of American Publishers (AAP); the Book Manufacturers Institute; the American Booksellers Association; and the American Institute of Graphic Arts. Leon Shimkin, an executive of Simon and Schuster, later president of its Pocket Books division, was the moving spirit in this innovation, joined by Frederic Melcher, publisher of the trade journal, Publishers' Weekly; and Raymond Harwood, of Harper & Bros. (as it was then), and eventually its president. The lecturers in the course were equally distinguished names in the business.

The idea of a summer workshop originated at Radcliffe in 1947, with the establishment of its "Summer Publishing Procedures Course," first directed by Helen Everitt, but then from 1950 to 1980 by Helen (Mrs. Diggory) Venn, known affectionately to a generation of grateful students as "Doylie." This was not only the prototype for such workshops which would become the core of publishing education, but its remarkable placement record and the success of its graduates showed the way for the others.

Another approach was the fellowship program established at the University of Oklahoma in 1948, which became a training ground for editors and executives in university presses. Growth was slow, however, after these initial starts. The Graduate Institute of Book Publishing at NYU lasted only four years. Publishers helped to support it for four years, and the industry hired most of its graduates, but could not collectively muster an annual budget of $50,000 to guarantee its continuance, and the class of 1962 was its last. Many of its graduates are today publishing executives, editors and directors of divisions.

Courses in 1979, both educators and publishers were surprised to discover that 200 courses were being offered in a hundred institutions, from those long established in the East to newer programs at Northern Arizona and Arkansas State universities. Since none of those outside New York and Boston had enjoyed any help or guidance from the industry, the AAP sought to remedy that neglect by establishing its "Education for Publishing Program," which laid down curriculum guidelines, published a number of helpful booklets (including an annotated bibliography of the industry), and created a library and information center, the Stephen Greene Memorial Library, at AAP headquarters in New York. Workshops were added later, along with a correspondence course, seminars, programs in specialized fields, and courses at City College in New York. Scholarships, fellowships and internships have been forthcoming from the industry itself. Unfortunately, a major budget cut at the AAP in 1984 resulted in the elimination of the publishing program. Also endangered are the credit and noncredit courses at the NYU Center for Publishing.

The summer courses remain at the core of publishing education today, attracting not only the just graduated but older career-changers as well. Besides the pioneer course at Radcliffe and the Summer Publishing Institute at NYU (now directed by Robert Carter, a former publishing and advertising executive), there is the Denver Publishing Institute, whose director is Elizabeth A. Geiser, a senior vice-president of the Gale Research Company; the Howard University Press Book Publishing Institute; the Rice Publishing Program; and others at Stanford University and several smaller institutions.

In schools of continuing education, there is the Publication Specialist Program at George Washington University; a certificate program in publishing at the University of California; a Publishing Studies Program at Hofstra University; and the graduate Oscar Dystel Fellowship in Book Publishing program, leading to the master's degree at NYU's Gallatin Division.

Further growth is limited by several factors. It is unlikely that publishing education will ever begin to equal the size and scope of journalism education, simply because publishing itself is a much smaller industry. The journalism schools and departments have long since ceased training people only for newspaper jobs. Their curricula now embrace magazine work, public relations, broadcast journalism, advertising (in a few places), and graduate training in the sociology of journalism which leads mostly to university teaching or work with polling organizations, a new industry in itself. Although publishing is
far larger than the trade field most people conceive it to be, and its job possibilities are substantially greater than the trade editor's position so many aspirants appear to desire most, it is still small by comparison with the other media.

Another deterrent to further growth is money. Like teaching, book publishing has long been well known as a poverty pocket in the employment market. Newspapering was in the same category until unionization changed pay scales radically, but book publishers for the most part have resisted unions successfully, and it seems unlikely that publishing houses will ever be organized as thoroughly as newspapers have been. They are quite different occupations.

From the beginning, however, publishing attracted people to whom money was secondary to the satisfactions of the job. As teaching appealed to those who found a dedication in imparting knowledge, so did publishing reach out to those who found in it a constant intellectual stimulation in dealing with ideas day after day—ideas of the broadest range. But even unionized teachers are now confronting the limitations imposed by taxpayers unwilling to pay for the excellence they demand, and unwilling to believe that even dedication yields to economic necessity. Similarly, publishers are not inclined to accept the fact that the endless stream of eager young aspirants pouring out of the colleges and universities every year and willing to work for substandard wages is ever going to dry up. For years, that stream has been flowing and publishing has been a buyer's market—a continuing glut of talented (and quite a few not-so-talented) people.

Salary scales in publishing have moved extremely slowly, and they remain far below general scales in the communications industry, particularly at the starting level. Publishers, involved in their own economic problems, simply assert that parity is inherently impossible. The corporations and conglomerates which now own so much of publishing, and who have changed its nature beyond recognition, are inclined to look at personnel in corporate terms, that is, as data on a sheet or a printout rather than as the human beings they have always been.

The facts are forcing an ultimate showdown in this area. What kind of a future can the hopeful students in these expanding publishing programs expect? They are told that a degree or attending the summer courses is no guarantee of a job, yet they persist, as always, and many of them do find positions. Their starting salaries may be as low as $10,000 or even lower, seldom more than $13,000. In a city like New York, where the majority of publishing houses are, that means a beginner must live with someone, be supported by someone at least partially, or find a place
in a dangerous near-slum. The fact that many of them do so is a testimonial to the glamorous image of publishing which still attracts graduates.

But the inexorable facts of economic life are beginning to end this perennially happy situation for the publishers. Just as good teachers are slipping out of the system faster than the schools of education can pump inferior products into it, so are the signs of short supply beginning to be felt. It is no secret that the quality of editorial work, generally speaking, in major publishing houses is not what it once was. Work tends to be divided these days into marketing and the business side of publishing—where computer technology creates the same kind of revolution as it has produced elsewhere—and the editorial side—where work is done in the same traditional way, for the most part, yet with decreasing attention to excellence. Under corporate control, the idea is to sell. Graduates who emerge from publishing programs still not disillusioned by what they have heard—and that happens—find themselves living in a different world from those who entered publishing as recently as the Graduate Institute’s class of 1962.

There are falling enrollments in some publishing courses, increasing ones in others. It is too soon to tell. But if publishing becomes a corporation job like any other, it seems probable that college graduates will seek the more lucrative corporate ladder in other kinds of businesses. Advancement in publishing tends to be more rapid, especially in such areas as promotion and publicity, but the salary ceiling can be reached rather quickly, and the choice becomes settling for what has been achieved or moving to another business. There is a considerable outward movement.

Another negative factor with which publishing courses must deal is continued resistance on the part of employers. Nan Talese, for example, vice-president and executive editor of Houghton Mifflin, doubts that “there are any really effective training programs,” and that “experience in the job” is the greatest teacher. She advises aspirants to read Scott Berg’s biography of Max Perkins. But Perkins lived in the past world of publishing; except for three or four houses, he would be unemployable today. Older editors and executives perpetuate the ideas of that world, just as the newspaper people did before them, until the graduates prove them wrong.

What, exactly, are the publishing programs giving these graduates that makes them more valuable as employees than as though they came in over the transom, as manuscripts were once said to do. (Today, in many houses, unsolicited manuscripts are returned unopened or unread
Education for Publishing

unless preceded by a query letter.) Overall, the courses are designed to acquaint the students with the entire range of publishing opportunities. Many students have enrolled with the vague idea of being an editor and meeting interesting people. From the courses they learn that trade publishing is only a small part of the book world, that there are textbooks, scientific and technological books, children’s books, and other specializations. They learn that editors, too, are only a small part of the whole apparatus, which also includes the several steps in producing the book and selling it.

This knowledge not only enables them to make career choices—converting hopeful editors into production people, college travelers, or publicity workers—but it sends people into the publishing world who are already knowledgeable about the business, sometimes amazingly so, saving both theirs and the employer’s time when they start work.

The courses also introduce the students into that network of those already in it who are the sources of employment. People in publishing have always moved around in the business through these personal contacts, which are constantly proliferating, and it helps to have a head start. It is common, in fact, for those in publishing classes to be hired on the spot by the experts who come to do the lecturing.

Not everyone who attends publishing programs goes into the business, and those who don’t say they have found the experience—primarily the in-depth view they get of how an industry operates—valuable in other occupations.

Several programs do not confine their curricula to the book world, but include magazine work as well, opening the door to a much larger part of the communications industry. At both Radcliffe and NYU, for example, students spend half of their six-weeks course listening to experts from magazines, and practicing what is preached by preparing prototypes of new magazines, which include both editorial and business plans. Similarly, book publishing projects are carried out in the other half of the course, with assignments to be completed in advance.

At Denver, the course is centered entirely on books, and like the best of the others, it covers every aspect of the business but there is extra emphasis on marketing. The Denver Institute tracks its graduates carefully, as does Radcliffe, and its alumni spirit is high—creating, eventually, another network, as the best schools of journalism have done, which will lead to future employment of Denver graduates.

Rice’s program offers a different approach to publishing education, or at least a variation on the standard, by what it calls “simulation,” in which students are divided into competitive publishing
houses, with mock names ("Doublenight," for instance), budgets, and actual manuscripts to work on. Students decide on what job they want to do, as far as possible, through job descriptions, and they carry out the entire publishing process with at least some semblance of reality. Rice directs its efforts mostly toward regional and specialized publishing, an approach which has resulted in several graduates' setting up small presses.

One of the more recent publishing programs is at Howard University, where the institute is a part of the university press, whose director is Charles Harris, a former Doubleday and Random House editor. While the program was started to serve minority students, recent classes have been about evenly divided.

Stanford offers what is probably the shortest course in publishing education—only twelve days—but it is directed toward those already in the business who are prospects for middle management positions. In spite of this specialization, Stanford also has the highest enrollment, a maximum of 150 carefully screened students, who divide themselves into book and magazine work, with a few general sessions for both. Six case studies, in the manner of the Harvard Business School, are required of them.

Obviously, publishing education combines theory and practice in a variable mix that appears to work well, for the most part. General surveys of the industry, whether books or magazines, comprise the core of the curriculum, more intensive in some than in others. The faculties are drawn from professionals in the business, and they include many of the important names. These lecturers offer their services gratis for a minimal honorarium out of a sense of obligation to the industry they serve, as a result of an urge for new experience, nostalgia for the campus, mixed personal motives, and often because of the natural human feeling of doing something prestigious by lecturing at a university. Whatever their motive, it is the publishing professionals' collective willingness to do extra work in the hot summer weather that makes the programs possible. Those who devote time and effort to academic-year programs exhibit the dedication of true teachers, since the rewards are in job satisfaction, not the pocketbook.

Results have been encouraging in terms of job placement. Estimates range from Radcliffe's 95 percent employment record to more modest 40-60 percent ratios in the other schools. For some graduates, the courses are valuable because they help them decide that publishing is not the career they really want. Those who use the courses as a means of continuing education may or may not get better jobs in the places where
they are already employed; statistics are scanty. But in any case, the gain in knowledge cannot help making them more employable.

Those who have studied publishing education from the beginning believe that one of its chief assets has been to improve the position of women. For fifty years or more, publishing has employed a great many women, most of whom had to be content with jobs which stopped well short of the top. A major house, for example, might have ten editors, eight of whom would be men, and there would be no female executives—always with a few exceptions, of course. Publicity and promotion departments, however, were almost entirely the province of women, and so were children's books.

Publishing courses, beginning with Radcliffe, trained women to aspire to better things, and equipped them to handle higher opportunities. Most students in these courses, it may be added, are women. Today the old barriers are falling rapidly, and there are more female executives at every level and in every department of publishing than anyone would have thought possible just twenty years ago. Not all of them are graduates of publishing courses, by any means (the percentage may be relatively small) but the upward push of these graduates is becoming more visible, as the follow-up records disclose. It is not unknown for a woman graduate of Radcliffe, or NYU or Denver to go directly from school to a position as assistant to an executive in some publishing department. The rise to the top can be rapid.

On the other hand, for both sexes, the rise can be discouragingly slow, or even nonexistent. If there is a common complaint among graduates who have been on the job for a few years, it is that many publishers still believe that "apprenticeship" means long hours, low pay, and hard work for the same kind of rewards which are presumed to keep teachers teaching until they burn out. The wonder of it is that so many of these people continue to hold on to some kind of idealism and endure it, hoping for the best. While there are no reliable statistics to measure it, the flow out of publishing by disillusioned workers is increasing.

For women, too, in spite of greatly increased opportunities and their mass invasion of the executive level, traditional attitudes still prevail in many houses. Those who do not rise to the top quickly are likely to encounter the concealed agenda of bosses who believe young women don't really have to work, that they are only waiting for marriage, when they will abandon careers for children and housekeeping. In the present state of society, it seems incredible that such attitudes should persist in a supposedly liberal business, but some aspects of
old-fashioned publishing have died hard, and this is one of them. Complicating the situation of women in publishing still further, many of the best men have been lured away to related areas such as advertising and magazine publishing, which has had the effect of pushing many of the less-qualified men to the top. Many of them are truly threatened by able women most of whom have nowhere else to go. In the past women used publishing courses such as NYU’s as a way to gain skills and confidence that qualified them for in-house promotions. Closing down publishing education programs will limit chances for on-the-job advancement for many.

There is also some disillusionment with books themselves among graduates. Those on the editorial side who hoped to emulate the great editors of the past and discover new Hemingways or Fitzgeralds may find themselves preoccupied with romance novels or similar category-fiction. On the other hand, once exposed to the broad range of specializations which compose contemporary publishing, such editors may find an opportunity to pursue personal interests they have brought with them. This is particularly true for those who discover the thousands of small houses which have sprung up everywhere in the country in the past two decades.

There are those who believe that the answer to increasing attrition among young recruits in publishing—whether or not they are graduates of publishing courses—is to devise better programs of in-house training. Doubleday was a pioneer in this field with its internships, which produced a notable number of people who became key personnel. Variations on this theme might include more of the training offered by the defunct Graduate Institute, which involved a full day of work, on a Friday, in a publishing house, after four days (and two nights, sometimes three) of work in the classroom. Obviously, this would only be possible in programs running the full academic year.

That raises another question: How much education for publishing is advisable or necessary? “Necessary” can be disregarded, since there is no hope of agreement on that point. “Advisable” can be argued. Based on the extremely high success rate of the Graduate Institute at NYU, it could reasonably be asserted that this intensive program, far more demanding than most academic curricula save for medicine and the law, paid off. Certainly its graduates think so, and they have not regretted the full academic year they gave to it. But the six-week summer programs have also produced an impressive number of graduates who have done well in the business, and they could just as reasonably contend that it was enough.
For this writer, who has directed both kinds of programs, there is no satisfactory substitute for intensive training, even in a business where chance frequently appears to play as important a role as talent. The business of publishing is becoming much more complex than it has ever been, and the demands being made on those involved in it are much greater than they were even a quarter-century ago. There is some empirical evidence to show that an alarming percentage of workers in the field are not up to what is asked of them. We insist on intensive graduate work for medicine, the law, and university teaching—even for high school instruction—so it seems only logical to insist on advanced and intensive instruction for those who want to enter a profession which is so vital a contributor to the political and cultural life of the nation. Samuel Vaughan was quite correct in terming publishing “the accidental profession,” but in the new Age of the Computer, such casual recruiting may prove to be wholly inadequate. Publishers may need to develop more systematic recruitment procedures, greater financial rewards, and better training in both the technology and the decision-making processes involved in modern publishing.

For book publishing, as for any other business, it is important to keep bringing into it young people with new ideas, who are willing to experiment and overturn old ideas. One of publishing’s major problems in the past century has been its unwillingness to break with the past until it was compelled by events to do so. While the changes that have come about may be dismaying to those brought up in a different atmosphere, no one can expect the past to be maintained, much less recaptured. Publishing, which has sometimes been described as the largest floating crap game in the world, desperately needs new gamblers and new visions if it is to survive in a technologically competitive society. It has nowhere else to look for help than the educational programs which may quite possibly be the only source when the traditional flow—to which everyone has been accustomed for so long—has dwindled away to a trickle.

Reference

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Procedures for Proposing & Guest Editing an Issue of *Library Trends*

Scope

*Library Trends* focuses on library and information science topics of interest primarily to practicing librarians and information scientists and secondarily to educators and students. The style and tone of this quarterly are formal rather than journalistic or popular. *Library Trends* issues review the literature, summarize current practice and thinking, and evaluate the directions practice is taking. Papers must represent original work, published for the first time in *Library Trends*. Extensive updates of previously published studies are acceptable, but revisions or adaptations of published work are not sought.

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An issue editor proposes the theme and scope of a new issue, draws up a list of prospective authors and articles, and provides short annotations of the articles' scope or else gives a statement of the philosophy guiding the issue's development. The issue prospectus is examined by the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) Publications Committee and requests for clarification or modification may be made before the prospectus is approved.

Once the prospectus is approved by the GSLIS Publications Committee, the issue will be scheduled for publication and the issue editor begins by inviting authors to write for the issue. The Publications Office will alert the authors to issue deadlines and will send them "Instructions for *Library Trends* Authors." The issue editor also will be sent a copy of the instructions along with "Suggestions for *Library Trends* Issue Editors." The suggestions are culled from our experience in editing and dealing with questions raised by issue editors and authors. Included are the typical stages an issue passes through; responsibilities of the issue editor; the responsibilities of the Publications Office editorial staff; and the typical timing of the writing, editing and production stages. Generally, it takes 1-2 years from proposal to publication.

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Fall 1985, *Women and Leadership in the Library Profession*. Editor: Rosemary Ruhig DuMont, Associate Professor, School of Library Science, The University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.