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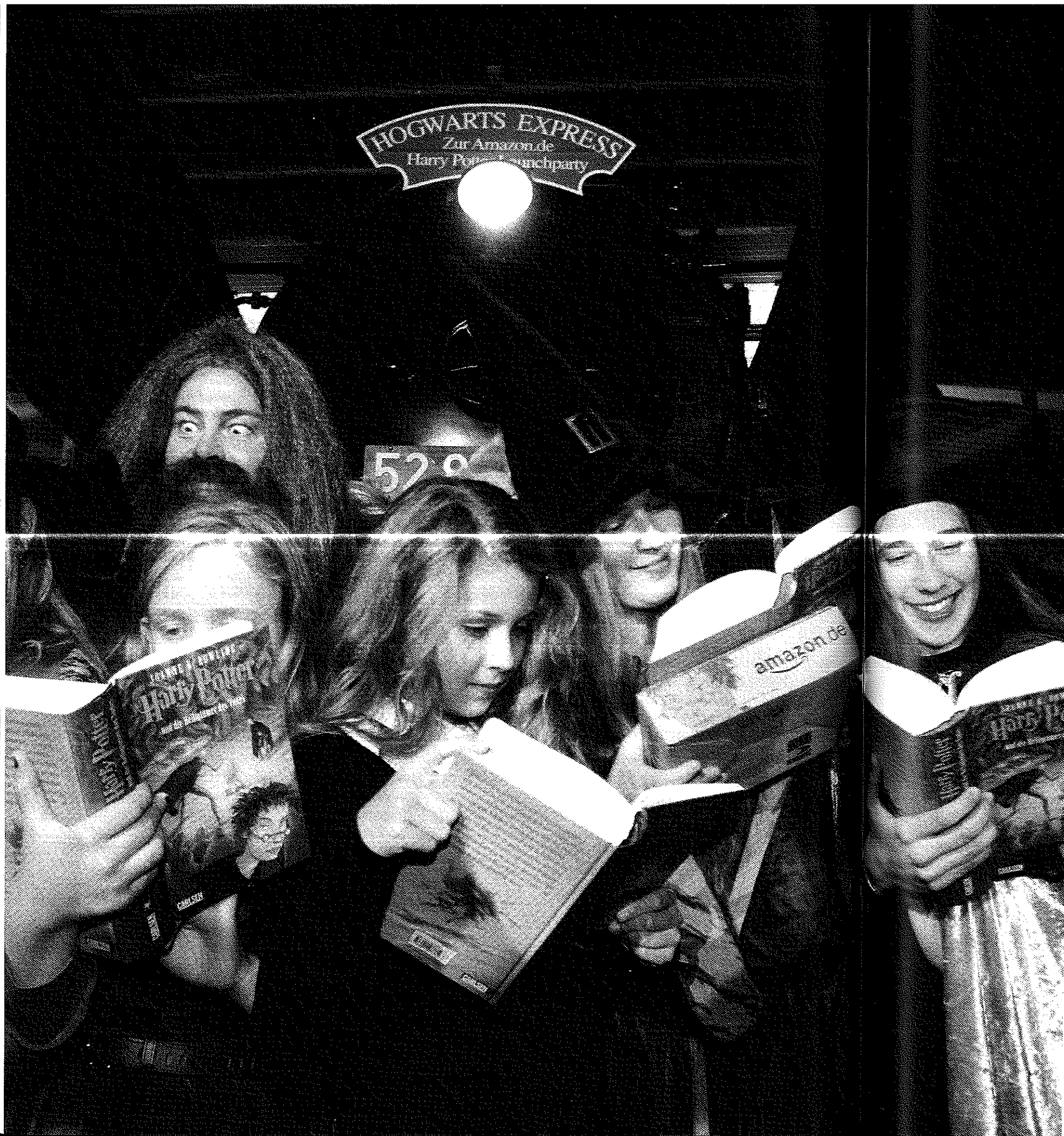
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Two of the most successful original book series of this generation have been J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter and Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials. The series' "successes" are measured not only in actual book sales but in the profitable movie franchises and other merchandising they have inspired, as well as the new interest in fantasy literature they have spawned. As the British trade magazine *Bookseller* said, "Together with Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials trilogy, Harry Potter showed that fantasy could sell."¹

Pullman started first, with the 1996 release of *The Golden Compass*, a story about 11-year-old Lyra Belaqua, an orphan ward of the fictional Jordan College in Oxford, England, who travels through parallel universes (Lyra's story continues in the *Subtle Knife*, 1997, and *The Amber Spyglass*, 2000). The series has sold more than 14 million copies, although it is probably best known in Great Britain, where the first volume won the Carnegie Award for children's fiction and the third volume was the first children's book to win the prestigious Whitbread Book of the Year.



In the Harry Potter series, each of the seven books follows a year in the life of orphan Harry Potter at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. In terms of commercial success, the Harry Potter series has broken all records: More than 375 million copies of the books in sixty-five languages had been sold by 2008. The final book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, was released in July 2007 and sold 13.1 million copies that year, becoming the fastest-selling book in history. The Harry Potter books also occupied the *New York Times* best-seller list for ten years beginning in 1998. Although some critics like Jack Zipes, editor of the *Norton Anthology of Children's Literature*, chided the Potter books for being "conventional and mediocre," Rowling's books have received several honors, including a commendation from the Carnegie Awards and the Whitbread Children's Book of the Year award in 1999.²

Both book series have multiple similarities beyond their fantasy subject matter, awards, and British authors. Each has expanded across media platforms, most famously in movies, where the Harry Potter series has generated some of the highest-grossing movies of the past decade. In fact, Warner Brothers, which produces and distributes the movies, has an agreement with Rowling to split the final book into two movies, doubling the pleasure for the audiences and the payday for corporate parent Time Warner. Time Warner's New Line Cinema unit also released *The Golden Compass* movie. It premiered to mixed reviews but did well in international release, and more movies are anticipated.

While the books inspired people to see the movies, the movies also inspired people to read more than just those

books. Pullman's and Rowling's successes revived interest in the older *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (also made into blockbuster movies) by J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* trilogy (spawning more blockbuster movies), while triggering a host of new fantasy books for children and adults.

Pullman's and Rowling's works also share controversy. The American Library Association reported that due to its religious viewpoints, *The Golden Compass* was one of 2007's most challenged books—books that receive formal complaints about being on classroom and library shelves because of potentially "offensive" content. Similar complaints about the Harry Potter series led to their being the most frequently challenged books so far in the twenty-first century.

In a world where digital media dominate our landscape, books—the oldest mass medium—still survive because they originate some of the biggest ideas and stories that resonate through the rest of the mass media. Many of these stories are timeless, but they are also copyrighted and—as Pullman's and Rowling's series demonstrate—can earn a lot of money in books and other media forms.

▲
"In fifty years today's children will not remember who survived Survivor . . . but they will remember Harry [Potter]."

ANNA QUINDLEN,
 NEWSWEEK, JULY 2000

▲ **IN THE 1950s AND 1960s**, cultural forecasters thought that the popularity of television might spell the demise of a healthy book industry, just as they thought television would replace the movie, sound recording, radio, newspaper, and magazine industries. Obviously, this did not happen. In 1950, more than 11,000 new book titles were introduced, and by 2007 publishers were producing over fifteen times that number—more than 170,000 titles per year (see Table 10.1). Despite the absorption of small publishing houses by big media corporations, more than twenty thousand different publishers—mostly small independents—issue at least one title a year in the United States alone.

The bottom line is that the book industry has met and survived many social and cultural challenges. For example, the book industry has managed to maintain a distinct cultural identity despite its convergence with other media. So, when Oprah Winfrey chooses a book for "Oprah's Book Club," it instantly appears on best-seller lists, in part because the book industry is willing to capitalize on TV's reach, and vice versa.

Our oldest mass medium is also still our most influential and diverse one. The portability and compactness of books make them the preferred medium in many situations (e.g., relaxing at the beach, resting in bed, traveling on buses or commuter trains), and books are still the main repository of history and everyday experience, passing along stories, knowledge, and wisdom from generation to generation.

In this chapter, we trace the history of books, from Egyptian papyrus to downloadable e-books. After examining the development of the printing press, we investigate the rise of the book industry

Year	Number of Titles
1778	461
1798	1,808
1880	2,076
1890	4,559
1900	6,356
1910	13,470 (peak until after World War II)
1915	8,202
1919	5,714 (low point as a result of World War I)
1925	8,173
1930	10,027
1935	8,766 (Great Depression)
1940	11,328
1945	6,548 (World War II)
1950	11,022
1960	15,012
1970	36,071
1980	42,377
1990	46,473
1996	68,175*
2001	114,487
2004	160,919
2006*	169,637
2007**	171,017

"A conservative reckoning of the number of books ever published is thirty-two million; Google believes that there could be as many as a hundred million."

NEW YORKER, 2007

TABLE 10.1
ANNUAL NUMBERS OF NEW BOOK TITLES PUBLISHED, SELECTED YEARS

Sources: Figures through 1945 from John Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States*, 4 vols. (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1972–81); figures after 1945 from various editions of *The Bowker Annual Library and Book Trade Almanac* (Information Today, Inc.) and Bowker press releases.

*Changes in the Bowker Annual's methodology in 1997 and 2006 "more accurately track and report on these figures."

**Estimate based on percentage change between 2006 and 2007.

"All good books are alike in that they are truer than if they had really happened and after you are finished reading one you will feel that all that happened . . . belongs to you: the good and the bad, the ecstasy, the remorse and sorrow, the people and the places and how the weather was."

ERNEST HEMINGWAY, *ESQUIRE* MAGAZINE, 1934

from early publishers in Europe and colonial America to the development of publishing houses in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As part of this discussion, we review the various types of books and the economic issues facing the book industry as a whole, particularly the growth of bookstore chains and publishing conglomerates. Finally, we consider recent trends in the industry including books on tape, e-books, and book preservation, and explore how books play a pivotal role in our culture by influencing everything from educational curricula to popular movies.

The History of Books from Papyrus to Paperbacks

Before books, or writing in general, oral cultures passed on information and values through the wisdom and memories of a community's elders or tribal storytellers. Sometimes these rich traditions were lost. Print culture and the book, however, gave future generations different and often more enduring records of authors' words.

Ever since the ancient Babylonians and Egyptians began experimenting with alphabets some five thousand years ago, people have found ways to preserve their written symbols. These first alphabets mark the development stage for books. Initially, pictorial symbols and letters were drawn on wood strips or pressed with a stylus into clay tablets, and tied or stacked together to form the first "books." As early as 2400 B.C.E., the Egyptians wrote on **papyrus** (from which the word *paper* is derived), made from plant reeds found along the Nile River. They rolled these writings in scrolls, much as builders do today with blueprints. This method was adopted by the Greeks in 650 B.C.E. and by the Romans (who imported papyrus from Egypt) in 300 B.C.E. Gradually, **parchment**—treated animal skin—replaced papyrus in Europe. Parchment was stronger, smoother, more durable, and less expensive because it did not have to be imported from Egypt.

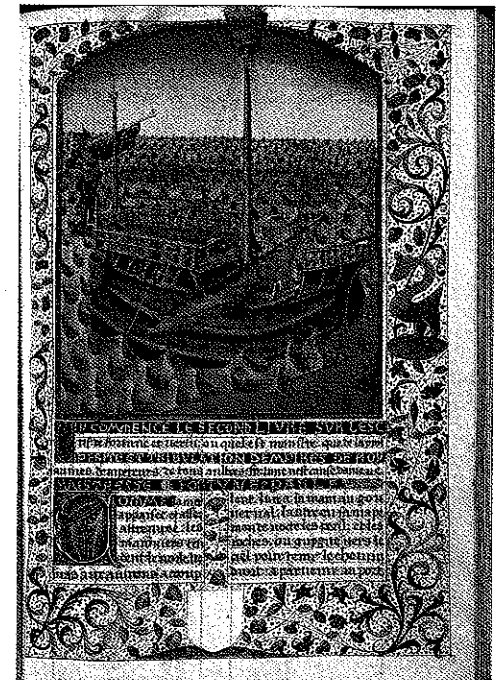
At about the same time the Egyptians started using papyrus, the Babylonians recorded business transactions, government records, favorite stories, and local history on small tablets of clay. Around 1000 B.C.E., the Chinese also began creating booklike objects, using strips of wood and bamboo tied together in bundles. Although the Chinese began making paper from cotton and linen around 105 C.E., paper did not replace parchment in Europe until the thirteenth century because of questionable durability.

The first protomodern book was probably produced in the fourth century by the Romans, who created the **codex**, a type of book made of sheets of parchment and sewn together along the edge, then bound with thin pieces of wood and covered with leather. Whereas scrolls had to be wound, unwound, and rewound, a codex could be opened to any page, and its configuration allowed writing on both sides of a page.

The Development of Manuscript Culture

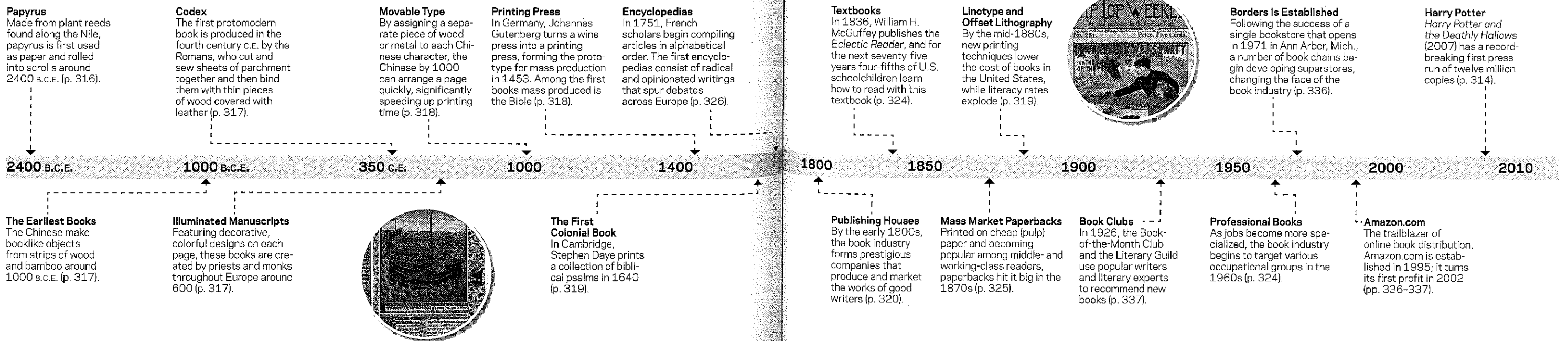
During the Middle Ages (400 to 1500 C.E.), the Christian clergy strongly influenced what is known as **manuscript culture**, a period in which books were painstakingly lettered, decorated, and bound by hand. This period also marks the entrepreneurial stage in the evolution of books. During this time, priests and monks advanced the art of bookmaking; in many ways, they may be considered the earliest professional editors. Known as *scribes*, they transcribed most of the existing philosophical tracts and religious texts of the period, especially versions of the Bible. Through tedious and painstaking work, scribes became the chief caretakers of recorded history and culture, promoting ideas they favored and censoring ideas that were out of line with contemporary Christian thought.

Many books from the Middle Ages were **illuminated manuscripts**. These books featured decorative, colorful designs and illustrations on each page, often made for churches or wealthy



ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS were handwritten by scribes and illustrated with colorful and decorative images and designs.

Books and the Power of Print



clients. Their covers were made from leather, and some were embedded with precious gems or trimmed with gold and silver. During this period, scribes developed rules of punctuation, making distinctions between small and capital letters, and placing space between words to make reading easier. (Older Roman writing used all capital letters, and the words ran together on a page, making reading a torturous experience.) Hundreds of illuminated manuscripts still survive today in the rare book collections of museums and libraries.

The Innovations of Block Printing and Movable Type

While the work of the scribes in the Middle Ages led to advances in written language and the design of books, it did not lead to the mass proliferation of books, simply because each manuscript had to be painstakingly created one copy at a time. To make mechanically produced copies of pages, Chinese printers developed **block printing**—a technique in which sheets of paper were applied to blocks of inked wood with raised surfaces depicting hand-carved letters and illustrations—as early as the third century. This constituted the basic technique used in printing newspapers, magazines, and books throughout much of modern history. Although hand-carving each block, or “page,” was time-consuming, this printing breakthrough enabled multiple copies to be printed and then bound together. The oldest dated printed book still in existence is China’s *Diamond Sutra* by Wang Chieh, from 868 C.E. It consists of seven sheets pasted together and rolled up in a scroll. In 1295, explorer Marco Polo introduced these techniques to Europe after his excursion to China. The first block printed books appeared in Europe during the 1400s, and demand for them began to grow among the literate middle-class populace emerging in large European cities.

The next step in printing was the radical development of movable type, first invented in China around the year 1000. Movable type featured individual characters made from reusable pieces of wood or metal, rather than entire hand-carved pages. Printers arranged the characters into various word combinations, greatly speeding up the time it took to create block pages. This process, also used in Korea as early as the thirteenth century, developed independently in Europe in the 1400s.

The Gutenberg Revolution: The Invention of the Printing Press

A great leap forward in printing was developed by Johannes Gutenberg. In Germany, between 1453 and 1456, Gutenberg used the principles of movable type to develop a mechanical **printing press**, which he adapted from the design of wine presses. Gutenberg’s staff of printers produced the first so-called modern books, including two hundred copies of a Latin Bible, twenty-one copies of which still exist. The Gutenberg Bible (as it’s now known) required six presses, many printers, and several months to produce. It was printed on a fine calfskin-based parchment called **vellum**. The pages were hand-decorated, and the use of woodcuts made illustrations possible. Gutenberg and his printing assistants had not only found a way to make books a mass medium, but also formed the prototype for all mass production.

Printing presses spread rapidly across Europe in the late 1400s and early 1500s. Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* became the first English work to be printed in book form. Many early books were large, elaborate, and expensive, taking months to illustrate and publish. They were usually purchased by aristocrats, royal families, religious leaders, and ruling politicians. Printers, however, gradually reduced the size of books and developed less expensive grades of paper, making books cheaper so more people could afford them.

The social and cultural transformations ushered in by the spread of printing presses and books cannot be overestimated. As historian Elizabeth Eisenstein has noted, when people could learn for themselves by using maps, dictionaries, Bibles, and the writings of others, they could differentiate themselves as individuals; their social identities were no longer solely dependent on what their leaders told them or on the habits of their families, communities, or social class.

“A good book is the best of friends, the same today and forever.”

MARTIN FARQUHAR TUPPER, *PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY*, 1838

The technology of printing presses permitted information and knowledge to spread outside local jurisdictions. Gradually, individuals had access to ideas far beyond their isolated experiences, and this permitted them to challenge the traditional wisdom and customs of their tribes and leaders.³

The Birth of Publishing in the United States

In colonial America, English locksmith Stephen Daye set up a print shop in the late 1630s in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 1640, Daye and his son Matthew printed the first colonial book, *The Whole Booke of Psalms* (known today as *The Bay Psalm Book*), marking the beginning of book publishing in the colonies. This collection of biblical psalms quickly sold out its first printing of 1,750 copies, even though fewer than thirty-five hundred families lived in the colonies at the time. By the mid-1760s, all thirteen colonies had printing shops.

In 1744, Benjamin Franklin, who had worked in printing shops, imported Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), from Britain, the first novel reprinted and sold in colonial America. Both *Pamela* and Richardson’s second novel, *Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady* (1747), connected with the newly emerging and literate middle classes, especially with women, who were just starting to gain a social identity as individuals apart from their fathers, husbands, and employers. Richardson’s novels portrayed women in subordinate roles; however, they also depicted women triumphing over tragedy, so he is credited as one of the first popular writers to take the domestic life of women seriously.

By the early 1800s, the demand for books was growing. To meet this demand, the cost of producing books needed to be reduced. By the 1830s, machine-made paper replaced more expensive handmade varieties, cloth covers supplanted more expensive leather ones, and **paperback books** with cheaper paper covers (introduced from Europe) all helped to make books more accessible to the masses. Further reducing the cost of books, Erastus and Irwin Beadle introduced paperback **dime novels** (so called because they sold for five or ten cents) in 1860. Ann Stephens authored the first dime novel, *Malaeska: The Indian Wife of the White Hunter*, a reprint of a serialized magazine story Stephens wrote in 1839 for the *Ladies’ Companion* magazine.⁴ By 1870, dime novels had sold seven million copies. By 1885, one-third of all books published in the United States were popular paperbacks and dime novels, sometimes identified as **pulp fiction**, a reference to the cheap, machine-made pulp paper they were printed on.

In addition, the printing process became quicker and more mechanized. In the 1880s, the introduction of **linotype** machines enabled printers to save time by setting type mechanically using a typewriter-style keyboard, while the introduction of steam-powered and high-speed rotary presses permitted the production of more books at lower costs. In the early 1900s, the development of **offset lithography** allowed books to be printed from photographic plates rather than from metal casts, greatly reducing the cost of color and illustrations and accelerating book production. With these developments, books disseminated further, preserving culture and knowledge and supporting a vibrant publishing industry.



PULP FICTION

The weekly paperback series *Tip Top Weekly*, which was published between 1896 and 1912, featured stories of the most popular dime novel hero of the day, the fictional Yale football star and heroic adventurer Frank Merriwell. This issue, from 1901, followed Frank’s exploits in the wilds of the Florida Everglades.

Modern Publishing and the Book Industry

Throughout the 1800s, the rapid spread of knowledge and literacy as well as the Industrial Revolution spurred the emergence of the middle class. Their demand for books promoted the development of the publishing industry, which capitalized on increased literacy and widespread compulsory education. Many early publishers were mostly interested in finding quality authors and publishing books of importance. But with the growth of advertising and the rise of a market economy in the latter half of the nineteenth century, publishing gradually became more competitive and more concerned with sales.

The Formation of Publishing Houses

The modern book industry developed gradually in the 1800s with the formation of the early “prestigious” publishing houses: companies that tried to identify and produce the works of good writers.⁵ Among the oldest American houses established at the time (all are now part of major media conglomerates) were J. B. Lippincott (1792); Harper & Bros. (1817), which became Harper & Row in 1962 and HarperCollins in 1990; Houghton Mifflin (1832); Little, Brown (1837); G. P. Putnam (1838); Scribner’s (1842); E. P. Dutton (1852); Rand McNally (1856); and Macmillan (1869).

Between 1880 and 1920, as the center of social and economic life shifted from rural farm production to an industrialized urban culture, the demand for books grew. The book industry also helped assimilate European immigrants to the English language and American culture. In fact, 1910 marked a peak year in the number of new titles produced: 13,470, a record that would not be challenged until the 1950s. These changes marked the emergence of the next wave of publishing houses, as entrepreneurs began to better understand the marketing potential of books. These houses included Doubleday & McClure Company (1897), The McGraw-Hill Book Company (1909), Prentice-Hall (1913), Alfred A. Knopf (1915), Simon & Schuster (1924), and Random House (1925).

Despite the growth of the industry in the early twentieth century, book publishing sputtered from 1910 into the 1950s, as profits were adversely affected by the two world wars and the Great Depression. Radio and magazines fared better because they were generally less expensive and could more immediately cover topical issues during times of crisis. But after World War II, the book publishing industry bounced back.

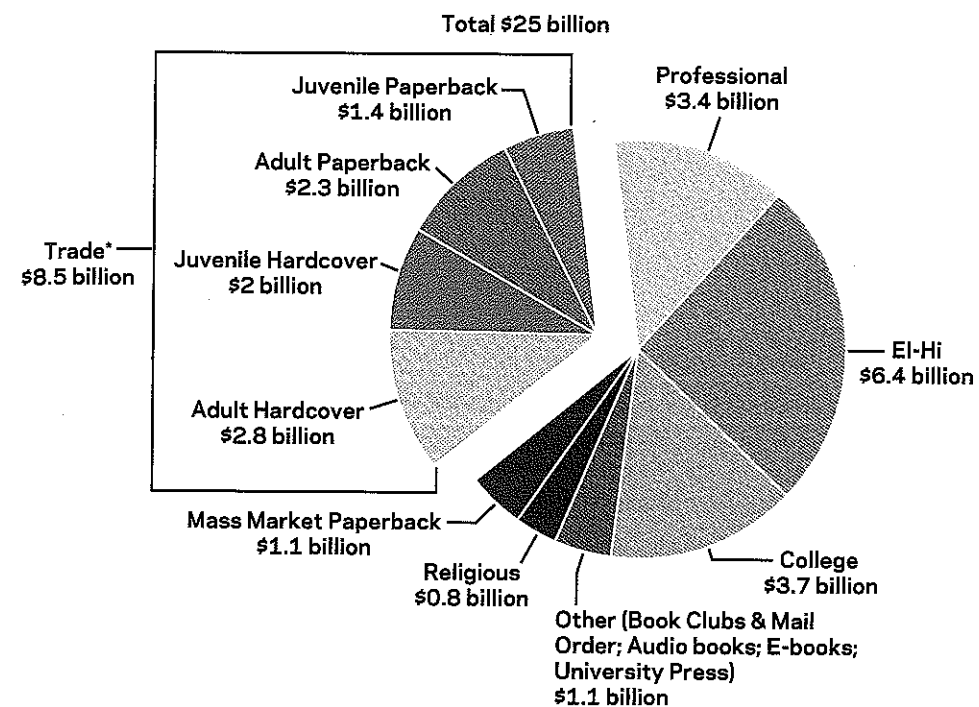
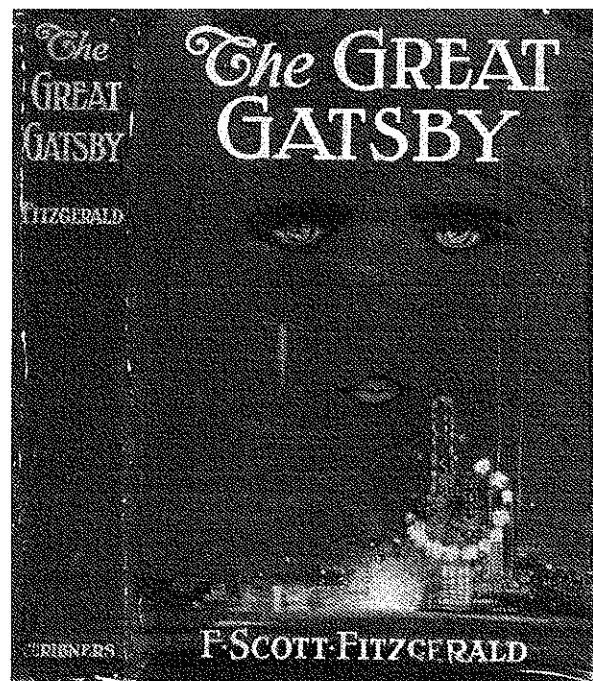
Types of Books

The divisions of the modern book industry come from economic and structural categories developed both by publishers and by trade organizations such as the Association of American Publishers (AAP), the Book Industry Study Group (BISG), and the American Booksellers Association (ABA). The

“He was a genius at devising ways to put books into the hands of the unbookish.”

EDNA FERBER, WRITER, COMMENTING ON NELSON DOUBLEDAY, PUBLISHER

SCRIBNER’S—known more for its magazines in the late 1800s than for its books—became the most prestigious literary house of the 1920s and 1930s, publishing F. Scott Fitzgerald (*The Great Gatsby*, 1925) and Ernest Hemingway (*The Sun Also Rises*, 1926).



categories of book publishing that exist today include trade books (both adult and juvenile); professional books; elementary through high school (often called “ei-hi”) and college textbooks; mass market paperbacks; religious books; reference books; and university press books. (For sales figures for the book types, see Figure 10.1.)

Trade Books

One of the most lucrative parts of the industry, **trade books** include hardbound and paperback books aimed at general readers and are sold at commercial retail outlets. The industry distinguishes among adult trade, juvenile trade, and comics and graphic novels. Adult trade books include hardbound fiction; current nonfiction and biographies; literary classics; books on hobbies, art, and travel; popular science, technology, and computer publications; self-help books; and cookbooks. (*Betty Crocker’s Cookbook*, first published in 1950, has sold more than twenty-two million hardcover copies.)

Juvenile book categories range from preschool picture books to young-adult or young-reader books, such as Dr. Seuss books, the Lemony Snicket series, the Fear Street series, and the Harry Potter series. In fact, the Harry Potter series alone provided an enormous boost to the industry, helping create record-breaking first-press runs: 10.8 million for *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005) and 12 million for the final book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007).

Since 2003, the book industry has also been tracking sales of comics and *graphic novels* (long-form stories with frame-by-frame drawings and dialogue, bound like books). As with the similar Japanese *manga* books, graphic novels appeal to both youth and adult, as well as male and female, readers. Will Eisner’s *A Contract with God* (1978) is generally credited as the first graphic novel (and called itself so on its cover). Since that time interest in graphic novels has grown, and in 2006 their sales surpassed comic books. Given their strong stories and visual nature, many movies have been inspired by comics and graphic novels, including *X-Men*, *Sin City*, *300*, and *The Dark Knight*. But graphic novels aren’t only about warriors and superheroes. Maira Kalman’s *Principles of Uncertainty* and Rutu Modan’s *Exit Wounds* are both acclaimed graphic novels, but their characters are regular mortals in real settings. (See “Case Study—Comic Books: Alternative Themes, but Superheroes Prevail” on pages 322–323.)

FIGURE 10.1
ESTIMATED U.S. BOOK REVENUE, 2007

Source: “Association of American Publishers 2007 SI Report: Estimated Book Publishing Industry Net Sales 2002–2007,” <http://publishers.org/main/IndustryStats/documents/s12007Final.pdf>.

*Estimates for juvenile hardbound and paperback categories do not include sales of the Harry Potter series.

“For books, issuing from those primal founts of heresy and rebellion, the printing presses have done more to shape the course of human affairs than any other product of the human mind because they are the carriers of ideas and it is ideas that change the world.”

JOHN TEBBEL,
A HISTORY OF BOOK PUBLISHING IN THE UNITED STATES, 1972

CASE STUDY

Comic Books: Alternative Themes, but Superheroes Prevail

By Mark C. Rogers

At the precarious edge of the book industry are comic books, which are sometimes called *graphic novels* or simply *comix*. Comics have long integrated print and visual culture, and they are perhaps the medium most open to independent producers—anyone with a pencil and access to a Xerox machine can produce mini-comics. Nevertheless, two companies—Marvel and DC—have dominated the commercial industry for more than thirty years, publishing the routine superhero stories that have been so marketable.

Comics are relatively young, first appearing in their present format in the 1920s in Japan and in the 1930s in the United States. They began as simple reprints of newspaper comic strips, but by the mid-1930s most comic books featured original material. Comics have always been published in a variety of genres, but their signature contribution to American culture has been the superhero. In 1938, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster created Superman for DC comics. Bob Kane's Batman character arrived the following year. In 1941, Marvel comics introduced

Captain America to fight Nazis, and except for a brief period in the 1950s, the superhero genre has dominated the history of comics.

After World War II, comic books moved away from superheroes and began experimenting with other genres, most notably crime and horror (e.g., *Tales from the Crypt*). With the end of the war, the reading public was ready for more moral ambiguity than was possible in the simple good-versus-evil world of the superhero. Comics became increasingly graphic and lurid as they tried to compete with other mass media, especially television and mass market paperbacks.

In the early 1950s, the popularity of crime and horror comics led to a moral panic about their effects on society. Frederic Wertham, a prominent psychiatrist, campaigned against them, claiming they led to juvenile delinquency. Wertham was joined by many religious and parent groups, and Senate hearings were held on the issue. In October 1954, the Comics Magazine Association of America adopted a code of acceptable conduct for publishers of comic books. One of the most restrictive examples of industry self-censorship in mass-media history, the code kept the government from legislating its own code or restricting the sale of comic books to minors.

The code had both immediate and long-term effects on comics. In the short run, the number of comics sold in the United States declined sharply. Comic books lost many of their adult readers

because the code confined comics' topics to those suitable for children. Consequently, comics have rarely been taken seriously as a mass medium or as an art form; they remain stigmatized as the lowest of low culture—a sort of literature for the subliterary.

In the 1960s, Marvel and DC led the way as superhero comics regained their dominance. This period also gave rise to underground comics, which featured more explicit sexual, violent, and drug themes—for example, R. Crumb's *Mr. Natural* and Bill Griffith's *Zippy the Pinhead*. These alternative comics, like underground newspapers, originated in the 1960s counterculture and challenged the major institutions of the time. Instead of relying on newsstand sales, underground comics were sold through record stores, at alternative bookstores, and in a growing number of comic-book specialty shops.

In the 1970s, responding in part to the challenge of the underground form, "legitimate" comics began to increase the political content and relevance of their story lines. In 1974, a new method of distributing comics—direct sales—developed, catering to the increasing number of comic-book stores. This direct-sales method involved selling comics on a nonreturnable basis but with a higher discount than was available to newsstand distributors, who bought comics only on the condi-

tion that they could return unsold copies. The percentage of comics sold through specialty shops increased gradually, and by the early 1990s more than 80 percent of all comics were sold through direct sales.

The shift from newsstand to direct sales enabled comics to once again approach adult themes and also created an explosion in the number of comics available and in the number of companies publishing comics. Comic books peaked in 1993, generating more than \$850 million in sales. That year the industry sold about 45 million comic books per month, but it then began a steady decline that led Marvel to declare bankruptcy in the late 1990s. After comic-book sales fell to \$250 million in 2000 and Marvel reorganized, the industry rebounded. By 2007, sales reached \$700 million, with several hundred million more generated through statue and action figure sales. Today, the industry releases 70 to 80 million comics a year. Marvel and DC control more than 70 percent of comic-book sales, but challengers like Dark Horse and Image plus another 150 small firms keep the industry vital by providing innovation and identifying new talent.

After the 1980s success of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (which began life as an alternative comic book), many independent companies were purchased by or entered into alliances with larger media firms that want to exploit particular characters or superheroes. DC, for example, is owned by Time Warner, which has used the DC characters, especially Superman and Batman, to build successful film and television properties through its Warner Brothers division. Marvel also got into the licensing act with film versions of *Spider-Man* and *X-Men*.

Comics, however, are again more than just superheroes. In 1992, comics' flexibility was demonstrated in *Maus*:

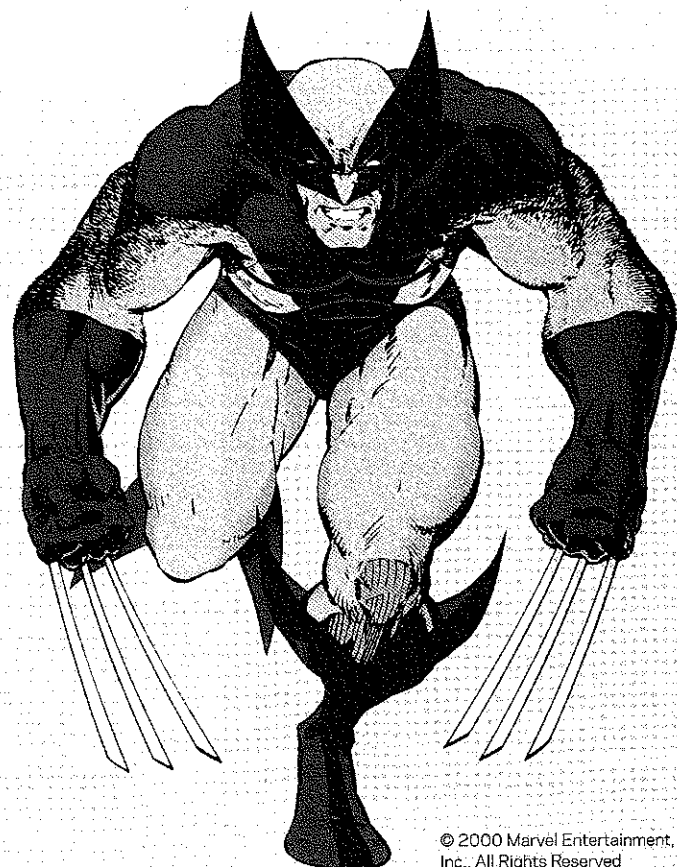


A Survivor's Tale by Art Spiegelman, cofounder and editor of *Raw* (an alternative magazine for comics and graphic art). The first comic-style book to win a Pulitzer Prize, Spiegelman's two-book fable merged print and visual styles to recount his complex relationship with his father, a Holocaust survivor.

Although electronic comics may prove a way for comics to continue to flourish—as suggested by underground comic author Scott McCloud in his manifesto *Reinventing Comics*—comics are also making a resurgence through traditional book publishers. For example, DC Comics (owned by Time Warner) signed a distribution contract with Random House (owned by Bertelsmann) in 2007 to give its comics, graphic novels, and expensive comic collections editions a greater presence in bookstores like Barnes & Noble.

As other writers and artists continue to adapt the form to both fictional and non-fictional stories, comics endure as part of popular and alternative culture. ▀

Mark C. Rogers teaches communication at Walsh University. He writes about television and the comic-book industry.

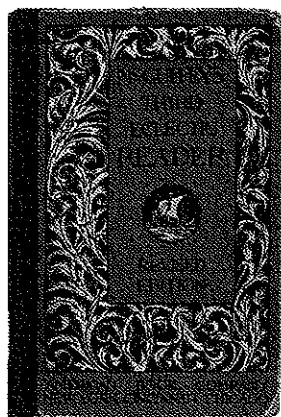


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TEXTBOOKS

First published in 1836, McGuffey readers helped enable the nineteenth-century U.S. literacy movement and the wave of western expansion. After the Civil War, they were the standard textbooks in thirty-seven states. With 130 million copies published since the first edition, the readers are still in print and in use, with the latest revised version published in the late 1990s.

"California has the ability to say, 'We want textbooks this way.'"

TOM ADAMS,
CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION, 2004

Professional Books

The counterpart to professional trade magazines, **professional books** target various occupational groups and are not intended for the general consumer market. This area of publishing capitalizes on the growth of professional specialization that has characterized the job market, particularly since the 1960s. Traditionally, the industry has subdivided professional books into the areas of law, business, medicine, and technical-scientific works, with books in other professional areas accounting for a very small segment of the market. These books are sold mostly through mail order, the Internet, or sales representatives knowledgeable about various subject areas.

Textbooks

The most widely read secular book in U.S. history was *The Eclectic Reader*, an elementary-level reading textbook first written by William Holmes McGuffey, a Presbyterian minister and college professor. From 1836 to 1920, more than 100 million copies of this text were sold. Through stories, poems, and illustrations, *The Eclectic Reader* taught nineteenth-century schoolchildren to spell and read simultaneously—and to respect the nation's political and economic systems. Ever since the publication of the McGuffey reader (as it is often nicknamed), **textbooks** have served a nation intent on improving literacy rates and public education. Elementary school textbooks found a solid market niche in the nineteenth century, while college textbooks boomed in the 1950s, when the GI Bill enabled hundreds of thousands of working- and middle-class men returning from World War II to attend college. The demand for textbooks further accelerated in the 1960s, as opportunities for women and minorities expanded. Textbooks are divided into elementary through high school (el-hi) texts, college texts, and vocational texts.

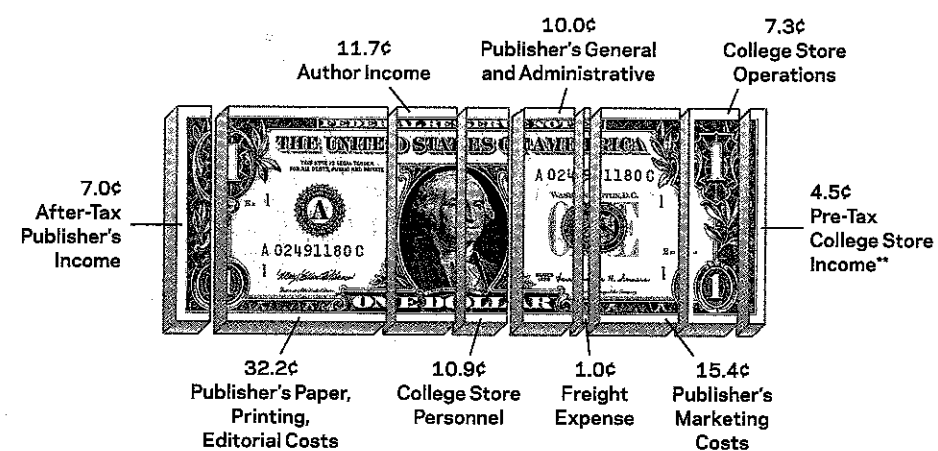
In about half of the states, local school districts determine which el-hi textbooks are appropriate for their students. The other half of the states, including Texas and California, the two largest states, have statewide adoption policies that decide which texts can be used. If individual schools choose to use books other than those mandated, they are not reimbursed by the state for their purchases. Many teachers and publishers have argued that such sweeping authority undermines the autonomy of individual schools and local school districts, which have varied educational needs and problems. In addition, many have complained that the statewide system in Texas and California enables these two states to determine the content of all el-hi textbooks sold in the nation, because publishers are forced to appeal to the content demands of these states.

Unlike el-hi texts, which are subsidized by various states and school districts, college texts are paid for by individual students (and parents) and are sold primarily through college bookstores. The increasing cost of textbooks, the mark-up on used books, and the profit margins of local college bookstores (which in many cases face no on-campus competition) have caused disputes on most college campuses. For the 2007-08 school year, the average college student spent between \$921 and \$988 on textbooks and supplies.⁶ (See Figure 10.2.)

As an alternative, some enterprising students have developed swap sites on the Web to trade, resell, and rent textbooks. Other students have turned to online purchasing, either through e-commerce sites like Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com, and eBay.com, or college textbook sellers like eCampus.com and textbooks.com. Those Web sites, plus college bookstores' own sites, now account for about one-quarter of college textbook purchases.⁷

Mass Market Paperbacks

Unlike the larger-sized trade paperbacks, which are sold mostly in bookstores, **mass market paperbacks** are sold on racks in drugstores, supermarkets, and airports as well as in bookstores. Contemporary mass market paperbacks—often the work of blockbuster authors such



as Stephen King, Danielle Steel, Patricia Cornwell, and John Grisham—represent the largest segment of the industry in terms of units sold, but because the books are low priced (under \$10), they generate less revenue than trade books. Moreover, mass market paperbacks have experienced declining sales in recent years because bookstore chains prefer to display and promote the more expensive trade paperback and hardbound books.

Paperbacks became popular in the 1870s, mostly with middle- and working-class readers. This phenomenon sparked fear and outrage among those in the professional and educated classes, many of whom thought that reading cheap westerns and crime novels might ruin civilization. Some of the earliest paperbacks ripped off foreign writers, who were unprotected by copyright law and did not receive royalties for the books they sold in the United States. This changed with the International Copyright Law of 1891, which mandated that any work by any author could not be reproduced without the author's permission.

The popularity of paperbacks hit a major peak in 1939 with the establishment of Pocket Books by Robert de Graff. Revolutionizing the paperback industry, Pocket Books lowered the standard book price of fifty or seventy-five cents to twenty-five cents. To accomplish this, de Graff cut bookstore discounts from 30 to 20 percent, the book distributor's share fell from 46 to 36 percent of the cover price, and author royalty rates went from 10 to 4 percent. In its first three weeks, Pocket Books sold 100,000 books in New York City alone. Among its first titles was *Wake Up and Live* by Dorothea Brande, a 1936 best-seller on self-improvement that ignited an early wave of self-help books. Pocket Books also published *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* by Agatha Christie; *Enough Rope*, a collection of poems by Dorothy Parker; and *Five Great Tragedies* by Shakespeare. Pocket Books' success spawned a series of imitators, including Dell, Fawcett, and Bantam Books.⁸

A major innovation of mass market paperback publishers was the **instant book**, a marketing strategy that involved publishing a topical book quickly after a major event occurred. Pocket Books produced the first instant book, *Franklin Delano Roosevelt: A Memorial*, six days after FDR's death in 1945. Similar to made-for-TV movies and television programs that capitalize on contemporary events, instant books enabled the industry to better compete with newspapers and magazines. Such books, however, like their TV counterparts, have been accused of shoddy writing, exploiting tragedies, and avoiding in-depth analysis and historical perspective. Instant books have also made government reports into best-sellers. In 1964 Bantam published *The Report of the Warren Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy*. After receiving the 385,000-word report on a Friday afternoon, Bantam staffers immediately began editing the Warren Report, and

FIGURE 10.2

WHERE THE NEW TEXTBOOK DOLLAR GOES*

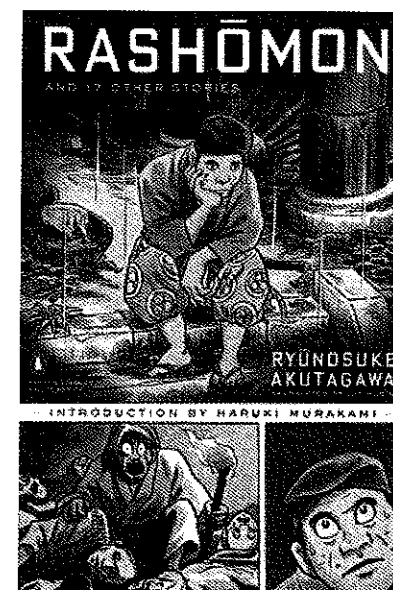
Source: © 2008 by the National Association of College Stores, [www.nacs.org/common/research/textbook\\$.pdf](http://www.nacs.org/common/research/textbook$.pdf).

*College store numbers are averages and reflect the most current data gathered by the National Association of College Stores. Publisher numbers are estimates based on data provided by the Association of American Publishers.

**Note: The amount of federal, state, and/or local tax, and therefore the amount and use of any after-tax profit, is determined by the store's ownership, and depends on whether the college store is owned by an institution of higher education, a contract management company, a cooperative, a foundation, or private individuals.

These numbers are averages and do not represent a particular publisher or store.

PAPERBACKS today are not only for new material but are a popular way to reprint older works. Shown is a collection of famed Japanese author Ryūnosuke Akutagawa's short stories, including *Rashomon* (originally published in 1914), and an introduction by modern author Haruki Murakami.



the book was produced within a week, ultimately selling over 1.6 million copies. Today, instant books continue to capitalize on contemporary events, including President Bush's address about the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Boston Red Sox World Series win in 2004, and Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Religious Books

The best-selling book of all time is the Bible, in all its diverse versions. Over the years, the success of Bible sales has created a large industry for religious books. After World War II, sales of religious books soared. Historians attribute the sales boom to economic growth and a nation seeking peace and security while facing the threat of "godless communism" and the Soviet Union.⁹ By the 1960s, though, the scene had changed dramatically. The impact of the Civil Rights struggle, the Vietnam War, the sexual revolution, and the youth rebellion against authority led to declines in formal church membership. Not surprisingly, sales of some types of religious books dropped as well. To compete, many religious-book publishers extended their offerings to include serious secular titles on such topics as war and peace, race, poverty, gender, and civic responsibility.

Throughout this period of change, the publication of fundamentalist and evangelical literature remained steady. It then expanded rapidly during the 1980s, when the Republican Party began making political overtures to conservative groups and prominent TV evangelists. After a record year in 2004 (twenty-one thousand new titles), there has been a slight decline in the religious book category. However, it continues to be an important part of the book industry, especially during turbulent social times.

Reference Books

Another major division of the book industry—**reference books**—includes dictionaries, encyclopedias, atlases, almanacs, and a number of substantial volumes directly related to particular professions or trades, such as legal casebooks and medical manuals.

The two most common reference books are encyclopedias and dictionaries. The idea of developing encyclopedic writings to document the extent of human knowledge is attributed to the Greek philosopher Aristotle. The Roman citizen Pliny the Elder (23-79 C.E.) wrote the oldest reference work still in existence, *Historia Naturalis*, detailing thousands of facts about animals, minerals, and plants. But it wasn't until the early 1700s that the compilers of encyclopedias began organizing articles in alphabetical order and relying on specialists to contribute essays in their areas of interest. Between 1751 and 1771, a group of French scholars produced the first multiple-volume set of encyclopedias.

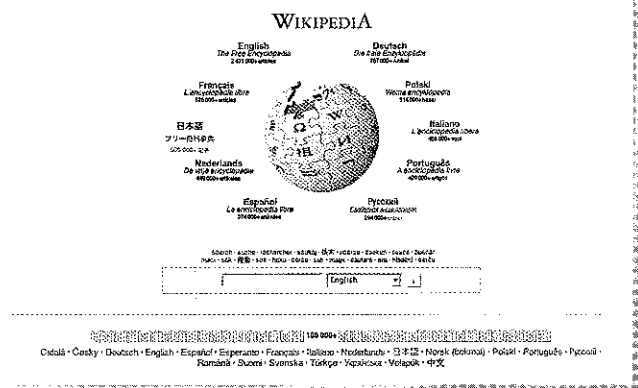
The oldest English-language encyclopedia still in production, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, was first published in Scotland in 1768. U.S. encyclopedias followed, including *Encyclopedia Americana* (1829), *The World Book Encyclopedia* (1917), and *Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia* (1922). *Encyclopaedia Britannica* produced its first U.S. edition in 1908. This best-selling encyclopedia's sales dwindled in the 1990s due to competition from electronic encyclopedias (like Microsoft's *Encarta*), and it went digital too. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *Encarta*, and *World Book Encyclopedia* are now the leading online and CD-based encyclopedias, although even they struggle today, as young researchers increasingly rely on search engines such as Google or online resources like Wikipedia to find information (though many critics consider these sources inferior in quality).

Dictionaries have also accounted for a large portion of reference sales. The earliest dictionaries were produced by ancient scholars attempting to document specialized and rare

"Religion is just so much a part of the cultural conversation these days because of global terrorism and radical Islam. People want to understand those things."

LYNN GARRETT,
RELIGION EDITOR AT
PUBLISHERS WEEKLY,
2004

WIKIPEDIA Since its launch in 2001, Wikipedia has grown to include over 10 million entries in 253 languages. Despite controversies about bias, inconsistency, and incorrect information, the site is one of the most popular on the Web for "general information."



words. During the manuscript period in the Middle Ages, however, European scribes and monks began creating glossaries and dictionaries to help people understand Latin. In 1604, a British schoolmaster prepared the first English dictionary. In 1755, Samuel Johnson produced the *Dictionary of the English Language*. Describing rather than prescribing word usage, Johnson was among the first to understand that language changes—that words and usage cannot be fixed for all time. In the United States in 1828, Noah Webster, using Johnson's work as a model, published the *American Dictionary of the English Language*, differentiating between British and American usages and simplifying spelling (for example, *colour* became *color* and *musick* became *music*). As with encyclopedias, dictionaries have moved mostly to online formats since the 1990s, and they struggle to compete with free online or built-in word-processing software dictionaries.

University Press Books

The smallest market in the book industry is the nonprofit **university press**, which publishes scholarly works for small groups of readers interested in intellectually specialized areas such as literary theory and criticism, history of art movements, contemporary philosophy, etc. Professors often try to secure book contracts from reputable university presses to increase their chances for *tenure*, a lifetime teaching contract. Some university presses are very small, producing as few as ten titles a year. The largest—The University of Chicago Press—regularly publishes more than two hundred titles a year. One of the oldest and most prestigious presses is Harvard University Press, formally founded in 1913 but claiming roots that go back to 1640, when Stephen Daye published the first colonial book in a small shop located behind the house of Harvard's president.

University presses have not traditionally faced pressure to produce commercially viable books, preferring to encourage books about highly specialized topics by innovative thinkers. In fact, most university presses routinely lose money and are subsidized by their university. Even when they publish more commercially accessible titles, the lack of large marketing budgets prevents them from reaching mass audiences. While large commercial trade houses are often criticized for publishing only blockbuster books, university presses often suffer the opposite criticism—that they produce mostly obscure books that only a handful of scholars read. To offset costs and increase revenue, some presses are trying to form alliances with commercial houses to help promote and produce academic books that have wider appeal.

Trends and Issues in Book Publishing

Ever since Harriet Beecher Stowe's abolitionist novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sold fifteen thousand copies in fifteen days back in 1852 (and three million total copies prior to the Civil War), many American publishers have stalked the *best-seller*, or blockbuster (just like in the movie business). While most authors are professional writers, the book industry also reaches out to famous media figures, who may pen a best-selling book (Ellen DeGeneres, Jerry Seinfeld, and Bill Clinton) or a commercial failure (Whoopi Goldberg, Jay Leno). Other ways publishers attempt to ensure popular success is to pay rights to license popular film and television programs or experiment with formats like audio and e-books. In addition to selling new books, other industry issues include the preservation of older books and the history of banned books and censorship.

Influences of Television and Film

There are two major facets in the relationship among books, television, and film: how TV can help sell books and how books serve as ideas for TV shows and movies. Through the TV

"Wikipedia, or any free information resources, challenge reference publishers to be better than free. . . . It isn't enough for a publisher to simply provide information, we have to add value."

TOM RUSSELL,
RANDOM HOUSE
REFERENCE
PUBLISHER, 2007

"The [university] presses are meant to be one of the few alternative sources of scholarship and information available in the United States. . . . Does the bargain involved in publishing commercial titles compromise that role?"

ANDRÉ SCHIFFRIN,
CHRONICLE OF HIGHER
EDUCATION, 1999



COMIC BOOKS like *Iron Man* have provided the movie business with the base material for some of the most successful recent films, including *Iron Man* (2008), the *Spider-Man* trilogy (2002, 2004, 2007), *Batman Begins* (2005), and *The Dark Knight* (2008).

"Over 1,250 books, novels, short stories, and plays . . . have been released as feature-length films in the United States, in English, since 1980."

MID-CENTURY PUBLIC LIBRARY, "BASED ON THE BOOK" DATABASE, 2008

exposure, books by or about talk-show hosts, actors, and politicians such as Stephen Colbert, Julie Andrews, Barack Obama, and Hillary Clinton sell millions of copies—enormous sales in a business where 100,000 in sales constitutes remarkable success. In national polls conducted from the 1980s through today, nearly 30 percent of respondents said they had read a book after seeing the story or a promotion on television.

One of the most influential forces in promoting books on TV is Oprah Winfrey. Even before the development of Oprah's Book Club in 1996, Oprah's afternoon talk show had become a major power broker in selling books. In 1993, for example, Holocaust survivor and Nobel Prize recipient Elie Wiesel appeared on Oprah. Afterward, his 1960 memoir, *Night*, which had been issued as a Bantam paperback in 1982, returned to the best-seller lists. (Oprah "officially" chose *Night* for her book club in 2006.) In 1996, novelist Toni Morrison's nineteen-year-old book *Song of Solomon* became a paperback best-seller after Morrison appeared on Oprah. In 1998, after Winfrey brought Morrison's *Beloved* to movie screens, the book version was back on the best-seller lists. The success of Oprah's Book Club extends far beyond anyone's expectations. Each selection becomes an immediate best-seller, generating tremendous excitement within the book industry. Recent Oprah selections include Sidney Poitier's *The Measure of a Man*, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera*.

The film industry gets many of its story ideas from books, which results in enormous movie rights revenues for the book industry and its authors. Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park* and Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, for instance, became highly successful motion pictures. But the most profitable movie successes for the book industry in recent years emerged from the fantasy works of two British authors—J. K. Rowling and J. R. R. Tolkien. Rowling's best-selling Harry Potter books have become hugely popular movies, as has Peter Jackson's film trilogy of Tolkien's enduringly popular *Lord of the Rings* (first published in the 1950s). Even classic and *public domain* books (no longer subject to copyright law) can create profits for the book industry. For example, in 2005, a screen version of Jane Austen's 1813 novel *Pride and Prejudice* boosted paperback sales of the novel.

Audio Books

Another major development in publishing has been the merger of sound recording with publishing. *Audio books*—also known as talking books or books on tape—generally feature actors or authors reading abridged versions of popular fiction and nonfiction trade books. Indispensable to many sightless readers and older readers whose vision is diminished, audio books are also popular among regular readers who do a lot of commuter driving or who want to listen to a book at home while doing something else—like exercising. The number of audio books borrowed from libraries soared in the 1990s and early 2000s, and small bookstore chains developed to cater to the audio-book niche. By the early 2000s, audio books were also readily available on the Internet for downloading to iPods and other portable devices. The four hundred-plus new audio books available annually help generate more than \$923 million in sales.

E-books

For several years, the biggest issue in the book industry is how to effectively take advantage of the digital age. Beyond digitizing the process of making books, publishers are exploring e-books and other virtual environments to attract readers who have strayed to other media forms.

At their most basic version, **e-books** are digital books accessed on a Web site and read on a computer. The more heralded consumer version involves electronic books that can be downloaded to portable e-book reading devices. Despite predictions that such e-books would

garner at least 10 percent of publishing sales by 2005, this market has not yet materialized. Incarnations of e-book readers, such as the RCA eBook reader and the Sony Reader, failed to gain mass appeal. Readers just never warmed up to sitting down with a cup of tea and a lightweight LED monitor. However, in 2007, Amazon introduced a new e-book reader that it hoped would change the state of the e-book. The Kindle is a lightweight, thin reader with an easy-on-the-eyes electronic paper display. Unlike earlier e-book readers, Amazon's Kindle uses a wireless connection to directly buy and download from a selection of more than 120,000 books, newspapers, and blogs from its online store (a smaller version of Amazon's bookstore). Book downloads take less than a minute, and the Kindle can hold more than 200 books at a time. In the months following the introduction of the Kindle, Amazon increased manufacturing capacity to keep up with demand.

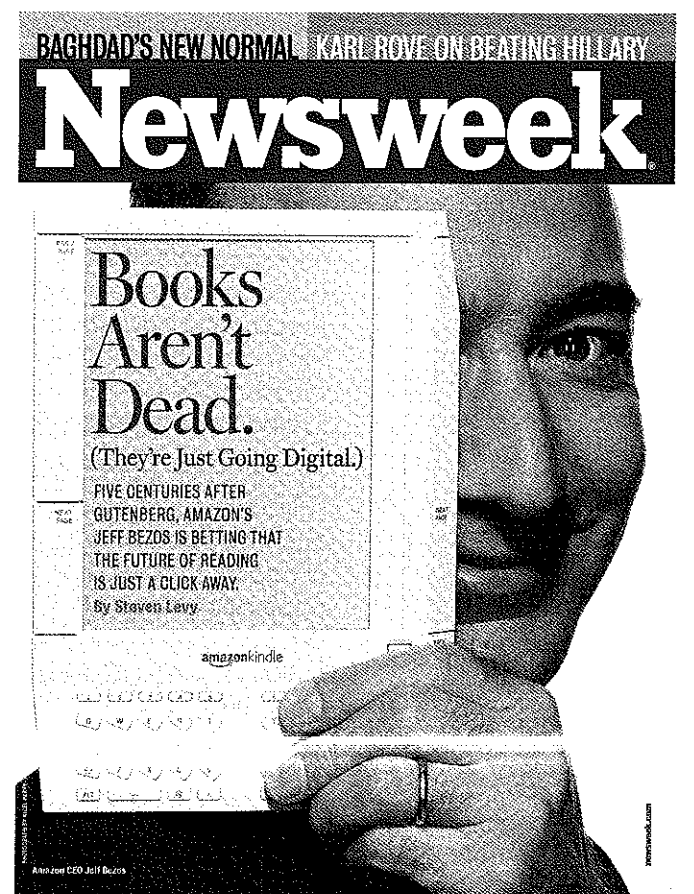
The publishing industry sees a future for e-books, but that market will develop slowly as engineers try to figure out how to make digital books an improvement on printed books. Until that time, distributors, publishers, and bookstores use digital technology to print books on demand, reviving books that would otherwise go out of print and avoiding the inconveniences of carrying unsold books or being unable to respond to limited demand for a book. Similarly, Internet-based publishing houses offer custom design and distribution for aspiring authors who want to self-publish a title.

Preserving and Digitizing Books

Another recent trend in the book industry involves the preservation of older books, especially those from the nineteenth century printed on acid-based paper, which gradually deteriorates. At the turn of the twentieth century, research initiated by libraries concerned with losing valuable older collections provided evidence that acid-based paper would eventually turn brittle and self-destruct. The paper industry, however, did not respond, so in the 1970s, leading libraries began developing techniques to halt any further deterioration (although this process could not restore books to their original state). Finally, by the early 1990s, motivated almost entirely by economics rather than by the cultural value of books, the paper industry finally began producing acid-free paper. Libraries and book conservationists, however, still had to focus attention on older, at-risk books. Some institutions began photocopying original books onto acid-free paper and made the copies available to the public. Libraries then stored the originals, which were treated to halt further wear. Today, research libraries are building secure, climate-controlled depositories for older books of permanent research value.

More recently, pioneering projects by Xerox and Cornell University have produced electronic copies of books through computer scanning. Other companies, such as netLibrary, have eschewed scanning, which they say produces too many errors, and have enlisted armies of typists in China, India, and the Philippines to convert books into electronic form. The Colorado-based company, a division of the nonprofit Online Computer Library Center, digitizes about 200 books a day. By 2008, netLibrary had more than 160,000 titles, and for a small fee more than sixteen thousand libraries worldwide subscribe to its service.

Finally, the Google Library Project, begun in 2004, features partnerships with the New York Public Library and several major university research libraries—including Harvard, Michigan, Oxford, and Stanford—to scan millions of books and make them available online. Google



THE KINDLE from Amazon is the latest, and arguably the most successful, attempt to transform books from paperback purchases at a brick-and-mortar store to a completely online experience.

"Let's face it, a printed book is a very good technology for the transfer of information. It has taken hundreds of years to perfect."

ROBERT McCORMACK, PRESIDENT OF E-PUBLISHER AUTHORHOUSE, 2003

"We're out to help build the Library of Alexandria version 2, starting with humankind's published works, books, music, video, Web pages, software, and make it available to everyone anywhere at any time, and forever."

BREWSTER KAHLE,
CO-FOUNDER OF THE
INTERNET ARCHIVE
AND ITS OPEN
CONTENT ALLIANCE,
2007

"Most would-be censors object to the obvious 's' words—sex, suicide, Satanism, and swearing. The novels of J. D. Salinger and John Steinbeck, which deal with self-conscious teenagers and the rough edge of life, respectively, are perennial targets."

MARY B. W. TAYLOR,
NEW YORK TIMES,
1995

TABLE 10.2
THE 10 MOST
CHALLENGED BOOKS
OF THE TWENTY-FIRST
CENTURY (2000-05)

Source: American Library Association, <http://www.ala.org/>. The list is based on more than three thousand formal complaints to remove books from libraries between 2000 and 2005.

uses fully automated "robots" that safely, quickly, and accurately scan even fragile books. The scanned books are then available under Google's Book Search. The Authors Guild, the Association of American Publishers, and several publishing companies brought a lawsuit against Google in 2005, arguing that Google needs explicit permission to digitize the entire contents of copyrighted books. Google argues that its Book Search shows only a limited amount of content for copyrighted books, so it is legal under "fair use" rules.

An alternative group, dissatisfied by the Google Library Project restricting its scanned book content from use by other commercial search services, started a competing nonprofit service in 2007. The Open Content Alliance is working with the Boston Public Library, several New England university libraries, and Yahoo! to digitize millions of books with expired copyrights and make them freely available through the Internet Archive.

Censorship and Banned Books

Over time, the wide circulation of books gave many ordinary people the same opportunities to learn that were once available to only a privileged few. However, as societies discovered the power associated with knowledge and the printed word, books were subjected to a variety of censors. Imposed by various rulers and groups intent on maintaining their authority, the censorship of books often prevented people from learning about the rituals and moral standards of other cultures. Political censors sought to banish "dangerous" books that promoted radical ideas or challenged conventional authority. In various parts of the world, some versions of the Bible, Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867), *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965), and Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) have all been banned at one time or another. In fact, one of the triumphs of the Internet is that it allows the digital passage of banned books into nations where printed versions have been outlawed. (For more on banned books, see "Media Literacy and the Critical Process: Banned Books and 'Family Values'" on opposite page.)

Each year, the American Library Association (ALA) compiles a list of the most challenged books in the United States. Unlike an enforced ban, a **book challenge** is a formal complaint to have a book removed from a public or school library's collection. Common reasons for challenges include sexually explicit passages, offensive language, occult themes, violence, homosexual themes, promotion of a religious viewpoint, nudity, and racism. (The ALA defends the right of libraries to offer material with a wide range of views, and does not support removing material on the basis of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.) Some of the most challenged books of the past decade include *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou, *Forever* by Judy Blume, and the Captain Underpants series by Dav Pilkey. (See Table 10.2, "The Ten Most Challenged Books of the Twenty-first Century.")

Rank	Title	Author
1	Harry Potter series	J. K. Rowling
2	<i>The Chocolate War</i>	Robert Cormier
3	Alice series	Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
4	<i>Of Mice and Men</i>	John Steinbeck
5	<i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i>	Maya Angelou
6	<i>Fallen Angels</i>	Walter Dean Myers
7	<i>It's Perfectly Normal</i>	Robie Harris
8	Scary Stories series	Alvin Schwartz
9	Captain Underpants series	Dav Pilkey
10	<i>Forever</i>	Judy Blume

Media Literacy and the Critical Process

1 DESCRIPTION. Identify two contemporary books that have been challenged or banned in two separate communities. (Check the American Library Association Web site [www.ala.org] for information on the most frequently challenged and banned books, or use the LexisNexis database.) Describe the communities involved and what sparked the challenges or bans. Describe the issues at stake and the positions students, teachers, parents, administrators, citizens, religious leaders, and politicians took with regard to the book. Discuss what happened and the final outcomes.

2 ANALYSIS. What patterns emerge? What are the main arguments given for censoring a book? What are the main arguments of those defending these particular books? Are there any middle-ground positions or unusual viewpoints raised in your book controversies? Did these communities take similar or different approaches when dealing with these books?

3 INTERPRETATION. Why did these issues arise? What do you

Banned Books and "Family Values"

In *Free Speech for Me—But Not for Thee: How the American Left and Right Relentlessly Censor Each Other*, Nat Hentoff writes that "the lust to suppress can come from any direction." Indeed, *Ulysses* by James Joyce, *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman, *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov, and *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee have all been banned by some U.S. community, school, or library at one time or another. In fact, the most censored book in U.S. history is Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the 1884 classic that still sells tens of thousands of copies each year. Often, the impulse behind calling for a book's banishment is to protect children in the name of a community's "family values."

think are the actual reasons why people would challenge or ban a book? (For example, can you tell if people seem genuinely concerned about protecting young readers, or are they really just personally offended by particular books?) How do people handle book banning and issues raised by First Amendment protections of printed materials?

4 EVALUATION. Who do you think is right and wrong in these controversies? Why?

5 ENGAGEMENT. Call or e-mail key players—teachers, librarians, or reporters—in the community for their views on what happened. Get their opinions on the resolution and how well they think the news media covered the issues. How well do you think the controversy was handled? How would you have handled it? What was done well? What might have been done differently?

The Organization and Ownership of the Book Industry

Compared with the revenues earned by other mass media industries, the steady growth of book publishing has been relatively modest. From the mid-1980s to 2007, total revenues went from \$9 billion to about \$25 billion. Within the industry, the concept of who or what constitutes a publisher varies widely. A publisher may be a large company that is a subsidiary of a global media conglomerate and occupies an entire office building, or a one-person home office operation using a desktop computer.

Ownership Patterns

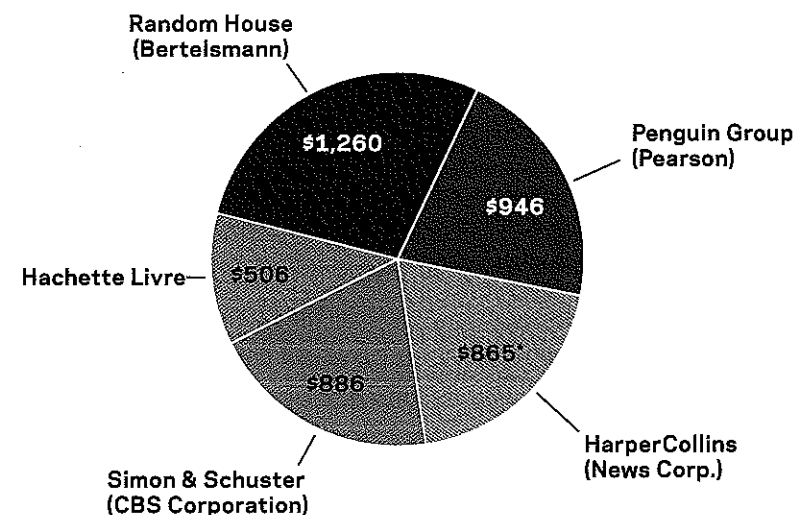
Like most mass media, commercial publishing is dominated by a handful of major corporations with ties to international media conglomerates. And since the 1960s and 1970s—when CBS

FIGURE 10.3

FIVE LARGEST TRADE BOOK PUBLISHERS (NORTH AMERICAN REVENUE IN \$MILLIONS)

Source: All revenues found in parent company SEC filings and annual reports for 2007 available on company Web sites and accessed on July 2, 2008.

*News Corp. revenues are estimated based on a claimed 3% increase from 2006. In its SEC filing, News Corp. combines worldwide book publishing revenue (including North America, the UK, and Australia) for a total of \$1.3 billion.



acquired Holt, Rinehart and Winston; Popular Library; and Fawcett—mergers and consolidations have driven the book industry. For example, the CBS Corporation (formerly Viacom) now also owns Simon & Schuster and its imprints, including Pocket Books; and News Corp. now owns HarperCollins and all of its imprints, including Avon (see Figure 10.3).

The largest publishing conglomerate is Germany's Bertelsmann. Starting in the late 1970s with its purchase of Dell for \$35 million and its 1980s purchase of Doubleday for \$475 million, Bertelsmann has been building a publishing dynasty. In 1998, Bertelsmann shook up the book industry by adding Random House, the largest U.S. book publisher, to its fold. With this \$1.4 billion purchase, Bertelsmann gained control of about one-third of the U.S. trade book market (about 10 percent of the total U.S. book market) and became the world's largest publisher of English-language books.¹⁰ Bertelsmann's book companies include Bantam Dell; Doubleday Broadway; Ballantine; Alfred A. Knopf; Random House and its imprints including Modern Library and Fodor's Travel; and more (see "What Bertelsmann Owns" on page 337).

A number of concerns have surfaced regarding the consolidation of the book industry. The distinctive styles of older houses and their associations with certain literary figures and book types no longer characterize the industry. Of special concern is the financial struggle of independent publishers and booksellers, who are often undercut in price and promotion by large corporations and bookstore chains. Large houses also tend to favor blockbusters or best-sellers and do not aggressively pursue more modest or unconventional books. From a corporate viewpoint, executives have argued that large companies can financially support a number of smaller struggling firms or imprints while allowing their editorial ideas to remain independent from the parent corporation. With thousands of independent presses able to make books using inexpensive production techniques or online options, book publishing appears healthy. Still, independents struggle as the large conglomerates define the industry's direction. (To learn about European book publishing, see "Global Village—Books: Cultural Status Defines Market" on page 333.)

The Structure of Book Publishing

A small publishing house may have a staff of a few to twenty people. Medium-size and large publishing houses employ hundreds of people. In the larger houses, divisions usually include acquisitions and development; copyediting, design, and production; marketing and sales; and administration and business. Unlike daily newspapers but similar to magazines, most publishing houses contract independent printers to produce their books.

GLOBAL VILLAGE

Books: Cultural Status Defines Market

For decades, European countries have debated a fundamental question of the book industry: Should prices of books be fixed, or should they be able to float freely in a competitive market?

About half of Europe's countries, including Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria, and Hungary have retail price management (RPM) laws or publisher agreements that require retailers (including online vendors) to sell books at the price fixed by the publisher or importer. Other countries in Europe, including the United Kingdom, Ireland, Poland, Finland, and Sweden, allow retailers to freely set book prices.

The question has significant consequences, and not just for consumers. As noted in this chapter, book retailing has changed dramatically in the United States, where retailers can sell books at any price they wish. In the past two decades, book superstores, mass merchandisers, and online stores have used large sales volumes and product lines to offer discounts of 40 percent or more on certain book prices, greatly undercutting smaller booksellers'

prices. The effect has been a sharp drop in the market share and number of independent bookstores.

The United Kingdom, which abandoned its nearly one-hundred-year-old fixed-price agreement in 1995, has since witnessed a similar change in its book market, with mass merchandisers like Tesco and Asda (owned by Walmart) offering deep discounts on books and driving many small and regional bookstores out of business. Popular bookstore chains like WH Smith expanded but now struggle to maintain profitability.

The argument for fixing prices is that books are not only consumer products but also cultural products. (Some countries, like Japan, extend fixed-pricing policies to newspapers and recorded music, too.) Fixed prices on cultural products, the argument goes, help to preserve diversity in book retailing and book publishing, as popular titles sold at full price help to subsidize the work of new authors and less popular titles.

The European Union (EU) advocates free trade and is pressing its members to give up their RPM laws. But the EU's biggest member, Germany, which has a high density of publishers and bookstores, is not inclined to change after more than a century of fixed prices and because books and neighborhood bookstores are part of German identity. Despite the EU's concern, fixed prices can help create more competition. Heike Fischer, a publisher from Köln (Cologne), says the idea behind the RPM is "equal protection. In this system everybody has the same chances, whether you're a small or big publisher

or bookseller, or a consumer in Berlin or some small town."¹¹

Most European countries treat books with favor in regard to sales taxes, reducing or eliminating for books the typical 18–25 percent tax added to most retail sales. But beyond reduced taxation on book sales, it's hard to determine whether fixed prices foster more reading or less. In Norway, deemed the "world's most avid readers," there is no tax on books, but since 2005 there has been an agreement limiting store discounts to 12.5 percent off the list price.¹² But other Scandinavian nations have high reading rates as well, including Sweden (which abandoned RPM in 1970, but has a reduced tax and subsidizes Swedish literature), and Denmark (whose fixed-price rule dates all the way back to 1837, and which charges a 25 percent tax on books).

The prices of books may have less impact on reading than on the actual appearance of a city. In France, Lang's Law, named after then Minister of Culture Jack Lang, revived a national law for uniform book pricing in 1981 to protect small bookstores against large chain discounters. A stroll through Paris reveals the effects of the law on the city's composition: plenty of small specialty bookstores; and nothing in sight approaching the size and discounts of a Barnes & Noble superstore.



TABLE 10.3
HOW A PAPERBACK'S
REVENUE IS DIVIDED

Source: Arianne Cohen, "A Publishing Company: Random House," New York, <http://nymag.com/news/features/2007/profit/32906/>.

Despite their low profit margins, mass market paperbacks remain an important segment of the book industry. For example, two-thirds of Random House's income comes from paperbacks. A Random House paperback, retail priced at \$10, breaks down this way:	
Author royalty	\$1.50
Publisher's costs	\$2.00
Paper, printing, and binding	\$1.00
Retailer	\$5.00
Publisher Profit:	\$.50

Most publishers employ **acquisitions editors** to seek out and sign authors to contracts. For fiction, this might mean discovering talented writers through book agents or reading unsolicited manuscripts. For nonfiction, editors might examine manuscripts and letters of inquiry or match a known writer to a project (such as a celebrity biography). Acquisitions editors also handle **subsidiary rights** for an author—that is, selling the rights to a book for use in other media, such as a mass market paperback or as the basis for a screenplay.

As part of their contracts, writers sometimes receive *advance money*, an early payment that is subtracted from royalties earned from book sales (see Table 10.3). Typically, an author's royalty is between 5 and 15 percent of the net price of the book. New authors may receive little or no advance from a publisher, but commercially successful authors can receive millions. For example, *Interview with a Vampire* author Anne Rice hauled in a \$17 million advance from Knopf for three more vampire novels. Nationally recognized authors, such as political leaders, sports figures, or movie stars, can also command large advances from publishers who are banking on the well-known person's commercial potential. For example, in 2006, former chairman of the Federal Reserve Alan Greenspan received \$8.5 million for his memoir, and, in 2007, Barbara Walters received \$4 million for hers.

After a contract is signed, the acquisitions editor may turn the book over to a **developmental editor** who provides the author with feedback, makes suggestions for improvements, and, in educational publishing, obtains advice from knowledgeable members of the academic community. If a book is illustrated, editors work with photo researchers to select photographs and pieces of art. Then the production staff enters the picture. While **copy editors** attend to specific problems in writing or length, production and **design managers** work on the look of the book, making decisions about type style, paper, cover design, and layout.

Simultaneously, plans are underway to market and sell the book. Decisions need to be made concerning the number of copies to print, how to reach potential readers, and costs for promotion and advertising. For trade books and some scholarly books, publishing houses may send advance copies of a book to appropriate magazines and newspapers with the hope of receiving favorable reviews that can be used in promotional material. Prominent trade writers typically have book signings and travel the radio and TV talk-show circuit to promote their books. Unlike trade publishers, college textbook firms rarely sell directly to bookstores. Instead, they contact instructors through direct-mail brochures or sales representatives assigned to geographic regions.

To help create a best-seller, trade houses often distribute large illustrated cardboard bins, called *dumps*, to thousands of stores to

display a book in bulk quantity. Like food merchants who buy eye-level shelf placement for their products in supermarkets, large trade houses buy shelf space from major chains to ensure prominent locations in bookstores. For example, to have copies of one title placed in a front-of-the-store dump bin or table at all the Borders bookstore locations costs about \$10,000 for two weeks.¹¹ Publishers also buy ad space in newspapers and magazines and on buses, billboards, television, radio, and the Web—all in an effort to generate interest in a new book.

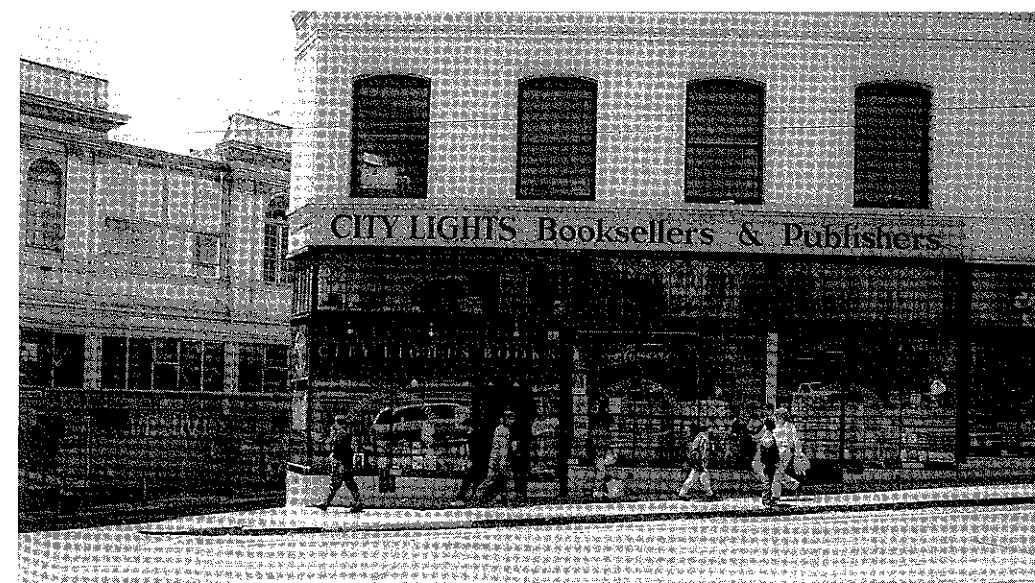
Selling Books: Stores, Clubs, and Mail Order

The final part of the publishing process involves the business and order fulfillment stages—shipping books to thousands of commercial outlets and college bookstores. Warehouse inventories are monitored to ensure that enough copies of a book will be available to meet demand. Anticipating such demand, though, is a tricky business. No publisher wants to be caught short if a book becomes more popular than originally predicted or get stuck with books it cannot sell, as publishers must absorb the cost of returned books. Independent bookstores, which tend to order more carefully, return about 20 percent of books ordered; in contrast, mass merchandisers such as Wal-Mart, Sam's Club, Target, and Costco, which routinely overstock popular titles, often return up to 40 percent. Returns this high can seriously impact a publisher's bottom line. For years, publishers have talked about doing away with the practice of allowing bookstores to return unsold books to the publisher for credit. In 2008, HarperCollins started a new subsidiary that will sell popular trade book titles through bookstores, but on a nonreturnable basis. In terms of selling books, there are two main outlets: bookstores/book clubs and mail order.

Bookstores

About nineteen thousand outlets sell books in the United States, including traditional bookstores, department stores, drugstores, used-book stores, and toy stores. Book sales, however, are dominated by two large chains: Borders-Waldenbooks and Barnes & Noble, which includes B. Dalton stores. These chains operate hundreds of stores each and account for about one-quarter of all book sales.

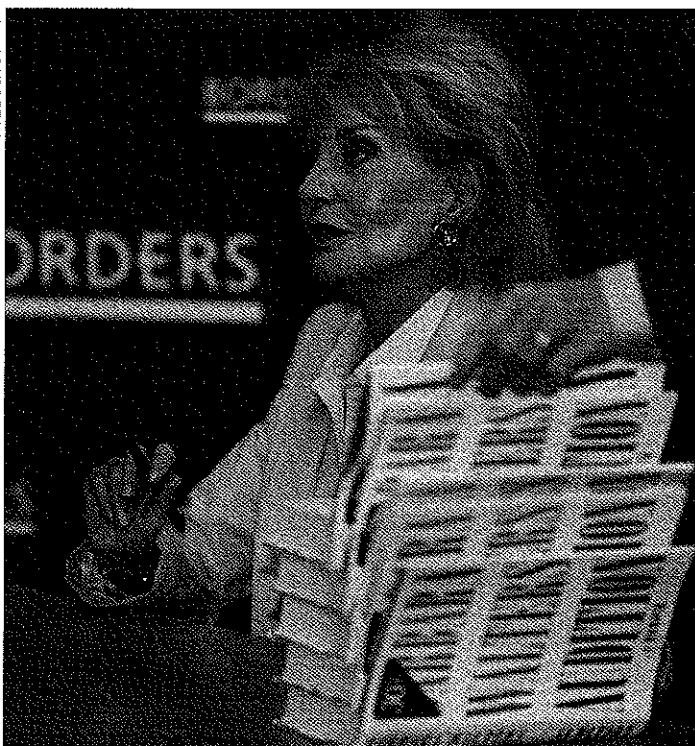
Shopping-mall bookstores have boosted book sales since the late 1960s. But it was the development of book superstores in the 1980s that really reinvigorated the business. The idea



"Like milk in a grocery store, the kids' section of a Barnes & Noble is almost always placed far from the entrance. Why? Simple: B&N children's sections are a customer magnet, and possibly the most child-friendly and parentally designed spaces in the history of retailing."

PAUL COLLINS,
VILLAGE VOICE, 2006

CITY LIGHTS is an independent bookstore in San Francisco. In business since 1953, the store was the first all-paperback bookstore and rose to prominence when it published Allen Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems* in 1956, enduring an obscenity trial as a result.



BOOK MARKETING

Barbara Walters signs her 2007 memoir, *Addition*. Book signings are a traditional and popular way to market a book, especially if the author is well-known.

TABLE 10.4

BOOKSTORES IN THE UNITED STATES

Sources: Various Years of The Bowker Annual Library and Book Trade Almanac (Medford, N.J.: Information Today, Inc.); company Web sites for Barnes & Noble and Borders.

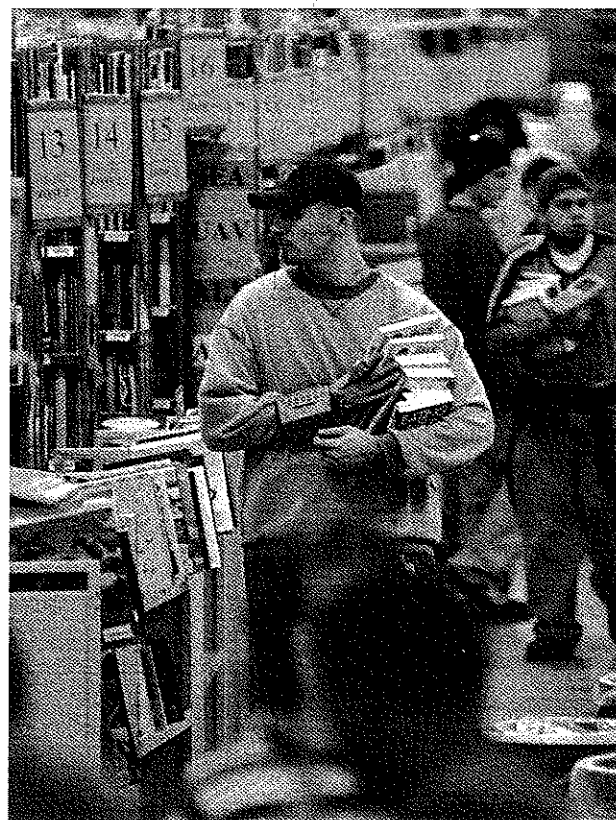
Year	Total # of bookstores	Total # of B&N and Borders Superstores (including Waldenbooks and B. Dalton)
1999	25,130	745
2001	25,916	2,160
2002	25,137	2,077
2003	23,643	2,038
2004	22,321	1,950
2007	18,456	1,925

"Large corporate booksellers, once an enemy of the little guy, now have enemies of their own: Amazon.com and big-box retailers like Costco and Target are taking on Borders with even deeper discounts than the chains used against the independents."

WASHINGTON POST, 2008

was to adapt the large retail store concept, such as Home Depot or Wal-Mart, to the book trade. Following the success of a single Borders store in Ann Arbor, Michigan, a number of book chains began developing book superstores that catered to suburban areas and to avid readers. A typical superstore now stocks up to 200,000 titles, compared with the 20,000 or 40,000 titles found in older mall stores. As superstores expanded, they began to sell recorded music and feature coffee shops and live performances. Borders had grown from 14 superstores in 1991 to more than 520 superstores and 460 Waldenbooks by 2008, but the company was losing money and put itself up for sale. The top bookstore chain, Barnes & Noble, was in better financial shape, operating more than 710 superstores and 85 smaller B. Dalton bookstores (see Table 10.4).

The rise of book superstores severely cut into independent bookstores' business, which dropped from a 31 percent market share in 1991 to about 10 percent by 2007.¹² Even more drastically, the number of independent bookstores has dropped from 5,100 in 1991 to just



ONLINE BOOKSELLERS

Employees filling holiday orders in Amazon.com's Seattle distribution warehouse.

1,000-plus today. Yet independents have successfully maintained their market share for several years, suggesting that their business has stabilized. To oppose chains, many independents have formed regional or statewide groups to plan survival tactics. For instance, independents in Madison, Wisconsin, once countered the arrival of a new Borders superstore by redecorating, extending hours and services, creating newsletters, and offering musical and children's performances.

Online Bookstores

Since the late 1990s, online booksellers have created an entirely new book distribution system on the Internet. The trailblazer is Amazon.com, established in 1995 by then-thirty-year-old Jeff Bezos, who left Wall Street to

start a Web-based business. Bezos realized books were an untapped and ideal market for the Internet, with more than three million publications in print and plenty of distributors to fulfill orders. He moved to Seattle and started Amazon.com, so named because search engines like Yahoo! listed categories in alphabetical order, putting Amazon near the top of the list.

In 1997, Barnes & Noble, the leading retail store bookseller, launched the heavily invested and carefully researched bn.com (of which publishing giant Bertelsmann bought 50 percent in the following year, after it canceled plans to start its own online store). The Web site's success, however, remains dwarfed by Amazon. In 1999, the American Booksellers Association also launched BookSense.com to help more than one thousand independent bookstores create an online presence. By 2008, online booksellers controlled between 21 and 30 percent of consumer book sales.¹³ The strength of online sellers lies in their convenience and low prices, and especially their ability to offer backlist titles and the works of less famous authors that even 200,000-volume superstores don't carry on their shelves. Online customers are also drawn to the interactive nature of these sites, which allow them to post their own book reviews, read those of fellow customers, and receive book recommendations based on book searches and past purchases. The chief business strategy of online booksellers is to buy exclusive listings with the most popular Internet portals. For example, bn.com signed a multimillion-dollar deal with Microsoft to be the "buy books" button on MSN.com, and it is the exclusive bookseller on AOL. Similarly, Amazon.com has a marketing agreement with Yahoo!

Book Clubs and Mail Order

Book clubs, similar to music clubs, entice new members with offers such as five books for one dollar, then require regular purchases from their list of recommended titles. Mail-order services also market specialized titles directly to readers. Originally, the two tactics helped the industry when bookstores were not as numerous as they are today. Modeled on the turn-of-the-century catalogue sales techniques used by retailers such as Sears, direct-mail services brought books to rural and small-town areas that had no bookstores.

The Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild both started in 1926. Using popular writers and literary experts to recommend new books, the clubs were immediately successful. Book clubs have long served as editors for their customers, screening thousands of titles and recommending key books in particular genres. During the 1980s, book clubs began to experience declining sales. In 2000, the Book-of-the-Month Club, the Literary Guild, and Doubleday (the most active book club publisher) combined their online efforts with a partnership called Bookspan—owned jointly by Bertelsmann and Time Warner. This strategy was intended to make book clubs more competitive with online booksellers. However, in 2007, Time Warner sold out to Bertelsmann, which then merged the book club business with its DVD and music clubs. In 2008 Bertelsmann sold the North American parts of its book and music clubs to a private investment group.

Mail-order bookselling is used primarily by trade, professional, and university press publishers. Mail-order, like book clubs, immediately notifies readers about new book titles. Mail-order bookselling was pioneered in the 1950s by magazine publishers. They created special sets of books, including Time-Life Books, focusing on such areas as science, nature, household maintenance, and cooking. These series usually offered one book at a time and sustained sales through direct-mail flyers and other advertising. To enhance their perceived value, most of these sets could be obtained only through the mail. Although such sets are more costly due to advertising and postal charges, mail-order books still appeal to customers who prefer mail to the hassle of shopping or to those who prefer the privacy of mail order (particularly if they are ordering sexually explicit books or magazines).

WHAT BERTELSMANN OWNS

Books

- Random House
 - Bantam Dell Publishing Group
 - Crown Publishing Group
 - Doubleday Broadway
 - Knopf
 - Random House Publishing Group
 - RH Audio Publishing
 - Random House Children's Books
 - RH Direct
 - RH Information Group
 - RH International
 - RH Large Print
 - RH Value Publishing
 - RH Ventures
 - Waterbrook Press
- Direct Group (Book Clubs)
 - Der Club (Germany)
 - Círculo de Lectores (Spain)

Music

- Sony BMG (50 percent with Sony)
 - Arista
 - BNA Records Label
 - Columbia Records
 - Columbia
 - Epic
 - J Records
 - Jive Records
 - LaFace Records
 - Legazy Recordings
 - Provident Label Group
 - RCA Records
 - SONY BMG Masterworks
 - SONY BMG U.S. Latin
 - Verity Records

Journalism

- Gruner + Jahr
 - G+J Germany
 - G+J International
 - G+J France/Prisma Press
 - G+J Online
 - Vodafone-live!
 - Yavido Mooph

Media and Printing

- Arvato
 - Mohn Media (pre-press, bookbinding)
 - Dynamic Graphic

Television/Radio

- RTL Radio
- RTL Television Group

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

- Bertelsmann is the largest media company in Europe, controls businesses in more than fifty countries, and has 102,397 employees.¹
- Bertelsmann revenues in 2007: \$29 billion.²
- Bertelsmann revenues by region: United States: 18.1 percent; Germany: 32.2 percent; Europe (excluding Germany): 44.3 percent; other countries: 5.4 percent.³
- Bertelsmann's subsidiary Random House releases 67 new books a week; its 33,000-book backlog, however, supplies 80 percent of its profit.⁴
- Bertelsmann's Random House is the largest English-language general trade book publisher in the world, overseeing fourteen publishing groups, which together operate seventy-seven imprints.⁵
- Bertelsmann is one of the world's leading television and radio content producers, and also operates production companies in the United States.
- Bertelsmann's RTL Group owns and operates TV channels in Germany (12), France (12), Belgium (3), the Netherlands (4), the United Kingdom (4), Australia, Luxembourg (2), Spain (3), Hungary (1), Romania (5), Croatia (1), Russia (1), and 43 radio stations across nine European countries.⁶
- Bertelsmann's U.K.-based FremantleMedia developed *American Idol* (and local versions in forty countries).⁷
- Bertelsmann subsidiary Sony BMG Music Entertainment has contracts with Beyoncé, Justin Timberlake, Christina Aguilera, The Fray, Dido, Carrie Underwood, Alicia Keys, and Bob Dylan.⁸



Alternative Voices

Even though the book industry is dominated by large book conglomerates and superstores, there are still alternative options for both publishing and selling books. One alternative idea is to make books freely available to everyone. This idea is not a new one—in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, industrialist Andrew Carnegie used millions of dollars from his vast steel fortune to build more than twenty-five hundred public libraries in the United States, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. Carnegie believed that libraries created great learning opportunities for citizens, and especially for immigrants like himself. Indeed, public libraries may be some of the best venues for alternative voices—where a myriad of ideas exist side by side.

One Internet source, *Newpages.com*, is working on another alternative to conglomerate publishing and chain bookselling by trying to bring a vast array of alternative and university presses, independent bookstores, and guides to literary and alternative magazines together. Their 2008 listing of independent publishers, for example, included hundreds of publishers, mostly based in the United States and Canada, ranging from Academy Chicago Publishers (which publishes a range of fiction and nonfiction books) to Zephyr Press (which “publishes literary titles that foster deeper understanding of cultures and languages”).

Finally, because e-books make publishing and distribution costs low, **e-publishing** has enabled authors to sidestep traditional publishers. A new breed of large Internet-based publishing houses, such as Xlibris, iUniverse, BookSurge, and AuthorHouse, design and distribute books for a comparatively small price for aspiring authors who want to self-publish a title. The companies then distribute the books in both print and e-book formats through Internet sellers. Although sales are typically low for such books, the low overhead costs allow higher royalty rates for the authors and lower retail prices for readers.

Books and the Future of Democracy

As we enter the digital age, the book-reading habits of children and adults have become a social concern. After all, books have played an important role not only in spreading the idea of democracy but also in connecting us to new ideas beyond our local experience. The impact of our oldest mass medium—the book—remains immense. Without the development of printing presses and books, the idea of democracy would be hard to imagine. From the impact of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which helped bring an end to slavery in the 1860s, to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, which led to reforms in the pesticide industry in the 1960s, books have made a difference. They have told us things that we wanted—and needed—to know, and inspired us to action. However, a 2007 National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) study, *To Read or Not To Read*, reported that “although there has been measurable progress in recent years in reading ability at the elementary school level, all progress appears to halt as children enter their teenage years.” Less than one-third of thirteen-year-olds read daily, a 14 percent decline from 20 years earlier. Among first-year college students, 65 percent read for pleasure less than an hour a week or not at all (even as reading for pleasure strongly correlates with academic achievement). Moreover, the NEA report noted that people who read regularly were more active in civic and cultural life and more likely to perform volunteer and charity work, crucial activities in a democratic society.¹⁴

Yet other studies also suggest that reading habits are generally more evident among the young than among older people; 60 percent of all avid or regular book readers, for example, are under the age of forty. The Harry Potter phenomenon—the books have now been translated into sixty-five languages—has renewed reading among young people. One study in England reported that 60 percent of children surveyed said that the Potter books had improved their reading skills and 48 percent said the series is the main reason they read more.

In addition to a declining interest in books, the economic clout of publishing houses run by large multinational corporations has made it more difficult for new authors and new ideas to gain a foothold. Often, editors and executives prefer to invest in commercially successful authors or those who have a built-in television, sports, or movie audience. In his book *The Death of Literature*, Alvin Kernan argues that serious literary work has been increasingly overwhelmed by the triumph of consumerism. People jump at craftily marketed celebrity biographies and popular fiction, he argues, but seldom read serious works. He contends that cultural standards have been undermined by marketing ploys that divert attention away from serious books and toward mass-produced works that are more easily consumed.

Yet books and reading have survived the challenge of visual and digital culture. Developments such as word processing, audio books, children's pictorial literature, and online services have integrated aspects of print and electronic culture into our daily lives. Most of these new forms carry on the legacy of books: transcending borders to provide personal stories, world history, and general knowledge to all who can read. Also, despite a powerful commercial book industry, about a thousand new independent publishers enter the business each year.

Since the early days of the printing press, books have helped us to understand ideas and customs outside our own experiences. For democracy to work well, we must read. When we examine other cultures through books, we discover not only who we are and what we value but also who others are and what our common ties might be. ▶



CARNEGIE LIBRARIES

The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP) was first opened in 1895 with a \$1 million donation from Andrew Carnegie (at the time it was called Main Library). In total, eight branches were built in Pittsburgh as “Carnegie Libraries.”

“Universally priced at twenty-five cents in its early years, the paperback democratized reading in America.”

KENNETH DAVIS,
TWO-BIT CULTURE, 1984