

The Publishing Business: from p-books to e-books  
Kelvin Smith

The Publishing Business is a recent paperback title from AVA's Creative Careers series. This attractively produced and highly visual book positions itself as offering an introduction to the world of publishing for those studying the industry as well as new entrants to the business. As such it sits somewhere between a course textbook and a practical introduction to a wide range of issues for the generalist. The scope is wide and takes in all aspects of the modern publishing world from print and electronic books to magazines and more specialist sectors such as journal and professional publishing, while providing decent coverage of the technological challenges the industry faces.

The book loosely follows the publishing process familiar to those who have worked in the industry from deciding what to publish and where, through to marketing and distribution. To give some context to the industry the first chapter charts the history of publishing from its origins and shows how publishing carries the legacy of technological and social change to the present day. The author makes the point that publishing has always been about adopting technology and it continues to do so today. Publishing is all about decisions and risk and the following chapter considers the choices publishers make and provides an overview of the many different publishing categories and formats. It is encouraging to see a section headed '*Who will Pay and How*'? as successful publishing is ultimately about making money. For those starting their careers this should be a constant question.

Chapter three considers the two ends of the publishing chain which are crucial to publishers - authors and readers. The focus here is very much on trade and general publishing and while the coverage of self publishing, agents and book fairs is good, it would have been helpful to see academic authors and readers covered too as there are considerable differences in how the different sectors operate, which could have been highlighted here by comparison.

The next chapter is entitled 'Editorial Processes' but there is so much included here the title does not do justice to the range of subjects discussed which includes market research, author contracts, publishing workflows and how editors work with different departments in the organisation. Production and design matters are covered next and there are helpful tables on print book sizes, typefaces and more technical issues around paper, print and bindings as well as digital workflows. For those not working in production this would be a useful section.

The sub-title of the book is *From p-books to e-books* and chapter six returns to some issues touched on earlier and explores the new legal, technical and administrative framework in which publishers now operate. Software standards such as XML, HTML5 and EPUB3 are discussed briefly but given this book is written for the generalist rather than the specialist, this is appropriate.

John B. Thompson argued that it's never been easier to become a publisher but it's also never been harder to market publications and as you would expect there is a sizeable chapter dedicated to marketing and promotion. The concept of the Four Ps (place, price, promotion, product) start this section before moving to the M word (metadata) and practical issues such as uploading information to Nielsen. There is surprisingly little on social media and it would have been interesting to have a few examples of how this medium has been used successfully to promote books in recent years.

As you would expect from an AVA title, production values are high and this is a visually engaging book. Each chapter has discussion questions, a round up of key points and an activity. There is heavy use of colour diagrams and tables throughout and pages are further broken up with photographs. The examples used are relevant and interesting. There is a decent glossary and a short list of online resources and industry associations.

In a book which takes in so many aspects of the modern publishing industry, it is unavoidable that many subjects can only be touched on briefly but nevertheless this book is a welcome addition to the growing list of titles covering the industry and as such should be appreciated by publishing students and those starting out their careers.

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