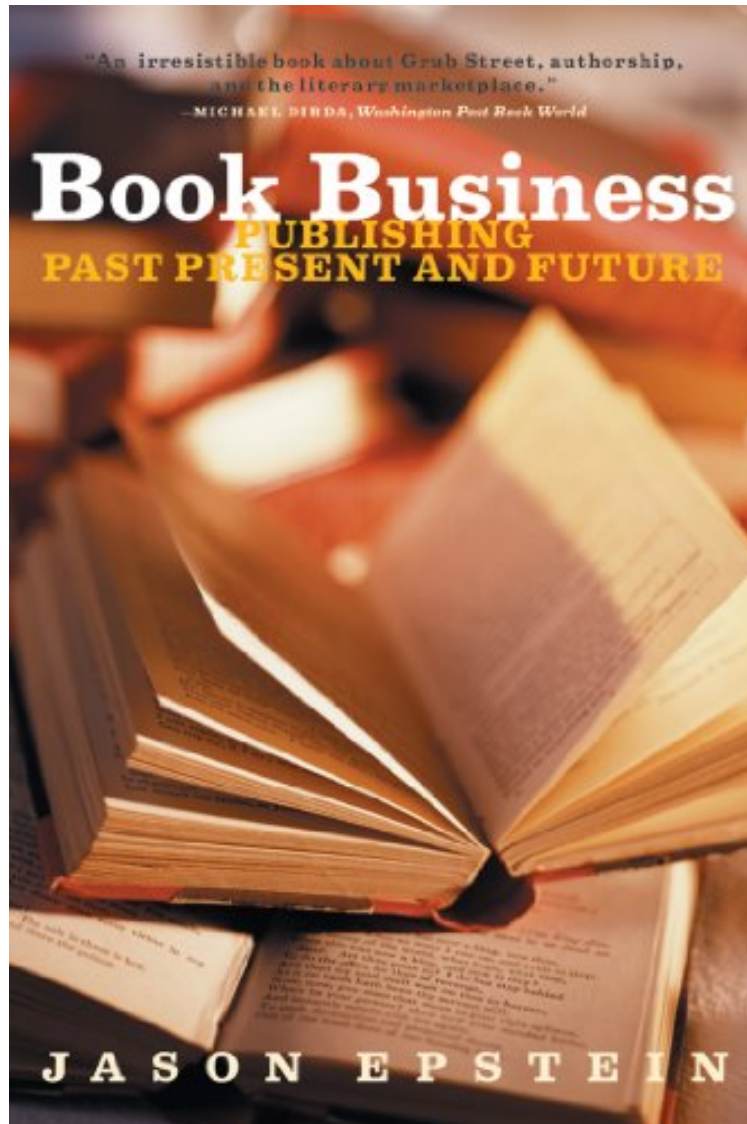


[Mobile book] Book Business: Publishing Past, Present, and Future: Publishing, Past, Present and Future

# Book Business: Publishing Past, Present, and Future: Publishing, Past, Present and Future

Von Jason Epstein

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**Von Jason Epstein : Book Business: Publishing Past, Present, and Future: Publishing, Past, Present and Future** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Book Business: Publishing Past, Present, and Future: Publishing, Past, Present and Future:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Brilliant Economic Insights about Books in Rambling FormVon Donald Mitchell"Technologies change the world but human

nature remains the same." That quote sums up the theme of the 7 essays in this interesting book. Mr. Epstein makes a persuasive case for electronics reducing the costs of reaching readers in ways so that authors and their readers will interact more directly, as they did before the 20th century. The bulk of the book is an anecdotal history of publishing and book retailing in the United States over the last 150 years. In most cases, Mr. Epstein uses his own career for examples of the changes that have occurred in the last 50 years. Mr. Epstein takes on this challenge from a position of considerable authority. He has been a top editor, working with authors like Norman Mailer, Vladimir Nabokov, E.L. Doctorow, Philip Roth, and Gore Vidal. Beyond that, he has been an important industry innovator, having helped introduce the quality paperback through Anchor Books, being a founder of The New York Review of Books, and helping establish the Library of America (featuring authentic versions of important American works in paperback). When time-shared computer services were first expanding, he helped develop the "Reader's Catalog" for getting backlist books.... He was the first recipient of the National Book Award for Distinguished Service for American Letters for "inventing new kinds of publishing and editing." Basically, the economics of creating a book involve getting the book edited and produced at the lowest possible fixed cost, and then being able to create copies at low marginal cost rates. Anything you can do to avoid any other overhead is all to the good. If an author simply publishes his own work electronically (as Stephen King has started doing), both costs reach a bare bones minimum. The potential for profits is enormous. Unfortunately for publishers and retailers, this new economic circumstance favors the authors and the readers. More and more book sales are coming from fewer and fewer authors (6 authors did over 60 percent of the top 100 books from 1986-1996). These authors now see themselves as needing business managers more than literary agents, so they can earn profits in more ways from their production. Mr. Epstein forecasts that more successful authors will simply buy the services they need from specialized firms rather than using publishers at all. The implication of this is that the major publishing conglomerates will soon be dismantled in a scramble to avoid the diseconomies of bidding higher and higher advances. Having not focused on building a backlist business, these firms will be unprofitable compared with alternative investments. The book business will probably go back to being run by people who do it for love of books, rather than love of profits. He sees chain bookstores surviving, but more as a place to have a cup of coffee and meet with others to discuss books. Nonbook outlets (possibly including Kinko's) could become places where you can go to get any book you want made to order. .... Authors will flourish as books always remain in print. New forms of books will arise that allow different combinations of material to be created, just to match the needs of an individual reader. This book is an expanded version of three lectures that Mr. Epstein gave at the New York Public Library in October 1999. The first chapter has already been published in the New York Review of Books. Unfortunately, after that chapter the book reads like a series of disconnected lectures rather than as one book. The first chapter is dynamite. The rest isn't nearly as good. The other sections are just detailed expositions of the points in the first chapter. So the content, while charming and interesting, is an elaborated magazine article. If Mr. Epstein had developed his economic insights in more depth, rather than providing a lot of historical background on the industry, the book would have been a lot better. As written, the book is backward looking 85 percent of the time and forward looking 15 percent of the time. Mr. Epstein needed a stronger editor to take his marvelous thoughts and shape them into something more visionary and coherent than this book is. But it must be tough to edit a legendary editor. I graded the book down one star for these faults. Some will grade it down more. If the book had been better focused and organized on the industry's future, I would have said that it was a more than five star book. So, you could say that I am really grading it down two or three stars for this problem. Now, please understand that the book is well written. The sentences and thoughts are beautiful. It just isn't formed into the best book it could be. If you like to read books of lectures, you won't mind a bit. So "Book Notes" junkies will love it! Ask yourself these questions: Where would you like to get your stories and information from the world's best writers and thinkers? How could the material be made more attractive and useful to you? How important are cost and convenience as issues for you? Cherish the potential of technology to expand our access to each other . . . always!

Kurzbeschreibung "An irresistible book about Grub Street, authorship and the literary marketplace." Washington Post Book World Jason Epstein has led arguably the most creative career in book publishing during the past half-century. He founded Anchor Books and launched the quality paperback revolution, cofounded the New York Review of Books, and created the Library of America, the prestigious publisher of American classics, and The Reader's Catalog, the precursor of online bookselling. In this short book he discusses the severe crisis facing the book business today a crisis that affects writers and readers as well as publishers and looks ahead to the radically transformed industry that will revolutionize the idea of the book as profoundly as the introduction of movable type did five centuries ago. As editor-publisher to some of the 20th-century's greatest writers (Edmund Wilson, Vladimir Nabokov, Jane Jacobs) as well as the virtual inventor of the trade paperback (meaning the "quality" type, as opposed to the drugstore mass-market), Jason Epstein is one of those rare publishing-world types who is as invested in the editorial creation of a good book as in its marketing and sales. It is that dual perspective that has guided his half-century-long publishing career

and that makes this compact yet expansive professional memoir such a lively, illuminating read for anyone curious how current trade publishing--basically popular general-interest fiction and nonfiction--became obsessed with a narrow pool of quickie bestsellers to the neglect of the far greater mass of slow-burners (known in the biz as "midlist") or of the perennial sellers from years past ("backlist"). But, Epstein follows up with great enthusiasm, the time is not long before the book biz will morph into a new cyberversion of the quirky, intimate "cottage industry" that it was in its precorporate era. It was in that era that Epstein came of age as a publisher, first at Doubleday in the 1950s, where he founded the successful Anchor Books, the first line of high-quality paperback reissues of classics. The four succeeding decades he spent at Random House, which in that time grew from a family-type shop into one of the largest and most profitable trade publishing houses in the U.S. (currently owned by the German media titan Bertelsmann). Epstein's chronicle of New York publishing jumps around nimbly in time--at one point, all the way back to the 19th century--but it is in recounting the heady, culturally efflorescent postwar years that he waxes most tender, regaling us with vignettes of Ralph Ellison, Mary McCarthy, John O'Hara, Frank O'Hara, W.H. Auden, Chester Kallman, and John Ashbery. Throughout, his entrepreneurial spirit in the service of good books is evident--first in the founding (along with, among others, his wife Barbara) of the still-extant New York of Books, then in the thorny 30-year process of publishing the classics imprint Library of America, and in the launching of The Reader's Catalog, a mail-order service from which customers could choose from what nearly every book on the planet in print--and which deservedly has been called the hard-copy precursor to the very site you're browsing right now. Like *The Business of Books*, the recent memoir from former Pantheon Books head Andre Schiffrin (Epstein's longtime colleague within Random House), Epstein's book decries the extent to which superstores like Barnes Noble have forced the high-stakes (and seldom fruitful) corporatization of book publishing. But Epstein prefers to look past the current situation to an imminent day when writers will sell directly to readers over the Internet, a format that will still demand the services of editors, publicists, and marketers but will cut out the costly middlemen of publishing companies, distributors, and superstores (though not small booksellers, he assures us, which nurture bonds among booklovers that even the Web can't sever). Yes, there's money to be made in trade books, Epstein asserts, but not necessarily overnight. And in this brisk, affable, and forward-looking volume, Epstein's own broad-ranging experience in the book biz seems to bear out his recurring theme: do it for love, not money, and the money (if not necessarily the millions) will eventually follow. --Timothy Murphy

As editor-publisher to some of the 20th-century's greatest writers (Edmund Wilson, Vladimir Nabokov, Jane Jacobs) as well as the virtual inventor of the trade paperback (meaning the "quality" type, as opposed to the drugstore mass-market), Jason Epstein is one of those rare publishing-world types who is as invested in the editorial creation of a good book as in its marketing and sales. It is that dual perspective that has guided his half-century-long publishing career and that makes this compact yet expansive professional memoir such a lively, illuminating read for anyone curious how current trade publishing--basically popular general-interest fiction and nonfiction--became obsessed with a narrow pool of quickie bestsellers to the neglect of the far greater mass of slow-burners (known in the biz as "midlist") or of the perennial sellers from years past ("backlist"). But, Epstein follows up with great enthusiasm, the time is not long before the book biz will morph into a new cyberversion of the quirky, intimate "cottage industry" that it was in its precorporate era. It was in that era that Epstein came of age as a publisher, first at Doubleday in the 1950s, where he founded the successful Anchor Books, the first line of high-quality paperback reissues of classics. The four succeeding decades he spent at Random House, which in that time grew from a family-type shop into one of the largest and most profitable trade publishing houses in the U.S. (currently owned by the German media titan Bertelsmann). Epstein's chronicle of New York publishing jumps around nimbly in time--at one point, all the way back to the 19th century--but it is in recounting the heady, culturally efflorescent postwar years that he waxes most tender, regaling us with vignettes of Ralph Ellison, Mary McCarthy, John O'Hara, Frank O'Hara, W.H. Auden, Chester Kallman, and John Ashbery. Throughout, his entrepreneurial spirit in the service of good books is evident--first in the founding (along with, among others, his wife Barbara) of the still-extant New York of Books, then in the thorny 30-year process of publishing the classics imprint Library of America, and in the launching of The Reader's Catalog, a mail-order service from which customers could choose from what nearly every book on the planet in print--and which deservedly has been called the hard-copy precursor to the very site you're browsing right now. Like *The Business of Books*, the recent memoir from former Pantheon Books head Andre Schiffrin (Epstein's longtime colleague within Random House), Epstein's book decries the extent to which superstores like Barnes Noble have forced the high-stakes (and seldom fruitful) corporatization of book publishing. But Epstein prefers to look past the current situation to an imminent day when writers will sell directly to readers over the Internet, a format that will still demand the services of editors, publicists, and marketers but will cut out the costly middlemen of publishing companies, distributors, and superstores (though not small booksellers, he assures us, which nurture bonds among booklovers that even the Web can't sever). Yes, there's money to be made in trade books, Epstein asserts, but not necessarily overnight. And in this brisk, affable, and forward-looking volume, Epstein's own broad-ranging experience in the book biz seems to bear out his recurring theme: do it for love, not money, and the money (if not necessarily the millions) will eventually follow. --Timothy Murphy