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Abstract: Innovative creators and publishers set trends, rather than following them, but studying trends can offer insights into publishing context. This coverage of global trends is founded on three convictions, that: publishing sits within the entertainment industry; is a balance between commerce and culture; and is cyclical. Concentration of ownership effects the content, format and style of publishing by enforcing key goals and strategies. Future trends will reflect global media influence on publishing, just as creative originality will continue to do so. **Key words:** global, children's, publishing, trends, licensing.

Introduction

"Can a small group of well-organised and charismatic Innovators really change the world?" (Scott Westerfeld, *So Yesterday*, Camberwell: Penguin, 2004).

Creators and publishers like to set trends, not follow them, but studying trends can give insight into the context in which books are published. Who can imagine now a world without Harry Potter; or one so mercurial that before you recognize a trend is 'so today' it's become 'so yesterday'? Or one in which the internet isn't a potential challenge to any reader's attention for printed books – Second Life, iPods, podcasting, SMS, MySpace, Facebook, Flickr and Twitter sound like a group of loveable family pets, but are actually technological distractions drawing kids away from, but often turning them on to reading and writing. Whatever the trends are, what any creator dreams of is a work which will be appreciated not only today, but also tomorrow. This coverage is founded on three convictions: that publishing sits within the entertainment industry; is a balance between commerce and culture; and that it's cyclical.

Global Entertainment Goals

The global entertainment industry is characterized by conglomerisation of ownership of huge media companies with many broadcasting and publishing interests¹. This effects the marketing and content of publishing properties in driving and enforcing similar goals:

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a) Vertical Integration, where a company owns various parts of the supply chain creating 'synergies' and Horizontal Integration, where a particular product is sold into a range of different markets.

b) Minimising Risk or Eliminating Competition is practiced by networks like Nickelodeon and online providers like Youtube.

c) Market Penetration is evinced by Disney with its 'family' entertainment'.

d) Maximising Property Usage via licensing. These goals are complicated now though, because technology has morphed into many new forms fracturing a highly volatile, unpredictable global market characterised by disaggregation, audience fragmentation and unbundling of content. Users prefer to purchase micro products² and increasingly turn to multi-channel delivery, so publishers need to target this selective customer via on-demand advertising, and copyright will be of increasing interest.

Global Strategies

These goals are reflected in four strategies:

1. Cross-Merchandising and Licensing generates film or TV tie-ins or computer games often bundled together. The "five most important segments of the merchandise licensing industry [are] character/ entertainment, corporate trademark/brand, fashion, sports and art licensing" (Gockel, 2000), the first being the most prominent and lucrative.

Those who believe that publishing is a dying business, losing in the war against interactive media, would have been surprised by the show of strength the industry displayed at Licensing International. By capitalizing on the latest trends, publishing continues to be a force to be reckoned with and the future looks strong (Molaro, 2007).

¹ NewsCorp; UK-based Pearson; German-based Bertelsmann Group; Hachette-Filipacchi (the media arm of the Lagardère industrial conglomerate) and Wendel publishing interests; US Viacom Group; German von Holtzbrinck Group; Copenhagen-based Egmont; Disney; Time Warner; Paris-based conglomerate Vivendi Universal (Ketupa.net. 2009); Scholastic, unique in publishing only for children, is the largest international publisher and distributor of children's books, with offices in fifteen countries.

² For example, a single song (from iTunes), or article (rather than subscribing to a journal).



Books are repackaged in novelty formats such as board books, pop-ups, spinoffs³, broken-up versions of classics, and as dolls, toys, and homeware⁴. Many out-of-print works have been revived and new ones launched with licensing in mind⁵. Movies and TV also spawn books such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Hilary Duff's *Lizzie McGuire⁶*, or Miley Cyrus's *Hannah Montana* series – a multi-million dollar film, book, merchandising, music industry with Disney. Proprietary Deals exclusively license special editions or bundled versions of books, to companies such as K-Mart. Creative or subsidiary rights are exploited by Value-added Incentives such as Food tie-ins (now less popular in view of the obesity in children debate)⁷ and proprietary book tie-ins⁸.

2. Branding via logos (eg Nike) has assumed primacy, and although publishers' logos don't generally sell well, book series logos do⁹, many quality books are also published in series¹⁰ and authors such as Andy Griffiths also become brands.

3. Niche Marketing sells books via book clubs (Scholastic in schools and Doubleday in the trade) and direct advertising. Some publishers such as Dorling Kindersley and Wilkins

⁶ Egmont and Warner Bros have signed a deal to create a range of books based on Hanna-Barbera characters.

³ Christopher Paolini's *Eragon's Guide to Alagaësia* (Knopf, 2009) tie-in to *Inheritance Cycle* or Lauren Child's *Charlie & Lola Busy Activity Set*.

⁴ ABC Books in Australia merchandises Babar and the Wiggles; Disney and Nickelodeon control the Simpsons, Pokémon, and Spiderman. Candlewick Press partnered with Books to Bed to create a *Guess How Much I Love You* pyjama gift set in 2005, and Sam McBratney and Anita Jeram's book has sold more than 19 million copies.

⁵ Ian Fleming Publications launched the 'Young Bond' series by Charlie Higson in 2004 and commissioned a novel *Devil May Care* by Sebastien Faulks to celebrate Fleming's centenary in 2008. A 2008 film was based on Cornelia Funke's *Inkheart* trilogy starring Brendan Fraser. TV series based on books include Bonnie Bryant's *The Saddle Club* and Cecily von Ziegesar's *Gossip Girl*. Disney animated Winnie the Pooh in 1966 with *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree* and in 2011, will release a new film as part of a rejuvenation of the classic brand.

⁷ Disney ended a ten year partnership with McDonald's, but 20th Century Fox has signed a five picture global deal with them for "family friendly" movies, with movie-centric Happy Meals.

⁸ It has included the plastic 'Leapfrog Tag Junior' which sits atop the book and reads aloud to it, punctuated by sound effects and music.

⁹ Hachette's *The Faraway Fairies* and *Dragon Blood Pirates* series and Hardie Grant Egmont's *Zacpower* and *Go Girl*.

¹⁰ Penguin's Aussie Bites, Nibbles and Chomps are commissioned from some of Australia's finest writers.



Farrago focus on one niche¹¹ and some answer niche demands by creating specialist imprints for graphic novels or Indigenous lists. There will be more future specialization. Niche marketing has seen even supermarkets fracture into types; for toys, baby gear, or books. Non-Traditional Sales Outlets such as book supermarkets Borders have grown, but face competition from virtual supermercados such as Amazon.com, and from interest-oriented outlets.

4. Creating 'Hot Properties' or Bestsellers includes marketing gimmicks¹², some carefully targeted¹³, celebrating anniversaries of popular books (eg *The Cat in the Hat*) with new editions, publishing celebrities such as Madonna whose five books have sold more than a million copies since *The English Roses* (2003) appeared in 37 languages in 110 countries¹⁴; and by producing highly original novelty books¹⁵.

Trends in Content

Fantasy and its sub-genres have grown. JK Rowling's unprecedented crossover success as the first billionaire author has been seen to have had some positive effects¹⁶ including: legitimising recreational reading, encouraging boys to read, the re-packaging of fantasy titles by authors such as Diana Wynne Jones, and new publications by authors such as Garth Nix, Juliet Marrillier or Kate Constable¹⁷. Vampires and Paranormal fantasy is a sub-genre phenomenon

¹¹ Dorling Kindersley with its non-fiction Eye-Witness Guides; Steve Parish Publishing's photographic Australiana; Working Title Press's pre-school focus; Wilkins Farrago which brings translated picture books to our market.

¹² With press packages announcing tour dates, key marketing points, giveaways and book-related items: 'letteropeners, tote bags, gel pens, compact mirrors, shoelaces – if it can be imprinted someone has done it' (Schmitz, 2006: 618).

¹³ Targeted promotion has included fifty handmade assemblage boxes containing carefully pinned-down puppetry artefacts from the production of Neil Gaiman's new movie *Coraline*' [delivered] to key media identities.

¹⁴ Celebrity authors: Jamie Lee Curtis, Billy Crystal, Spike Lee, Brooke Shields, Will Smith, John Travolta, Carly Simon, Jay Leno, Whoopi Goldberg, Steve Martin, Julianne Moore, Paul McCartney, John Lithgow, Jerry Seinfeld and Ricky Gervais's Flanimals series. Gerri Halliwell's *Eugenia Lavender* featured a character very like her friend Victoria 'Posh Spice' Beckham. Gloria Estefan tucked her hit single into her *Noelle's Treasure Trail*. In Australia celebrity authors include Andrew Daddo, James Valentine, Kylie Minogue and Bindi Irwin.

¹⁵ Such as Emily Gravett's *Wolves* (2005), Frances Watts' *Parsley Rabbit's Book about Books* (2007) or Robert Sabuda's pop-ups.

¹⁶ The final volume sold more than 72 million copies within twenty-four hours and has spawned six films.

¹⁷ Emily Rodda's *Deltora Quest* series has worldwide sales in 32 countries, exceeding 10 million. Lian Hearne secured a huge deal for the Otori trilogy; DM Cornish secured a \$1 million-plus publishing deal for his debut YA trilogy, Monster Blood Tattoo".



with the *Twilight* series making Stephenie Meyer the biggest selling author of 2009, and *The Twilight Saga: New Moon* License of the Year in June 2010 (LIMA)¹⁸. Fantasy sub-genres also include Future or Dystopian worlds (in Margo Lanagan's *Black Juice* (2005) and M.T. Anderson's *Feed* (2004)), and Alternative History (in Scott Westerfeld's *Leviathan* (2009) and M.T. Anderson's *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing* (2008). Young Adult fiction has changed since sales began to level out after the 1990s realistic fiction boom. Publishers responded to the YA death threat in three ways: "the series, the changing meaning of YA, and the exceptional book" (Aronson, 1998: 340). Crossovers by authors such as Markus Zusak, Sonya Hartnett, Mark Haddon and John Boyne appeal to both teenagers and adults¹⁹. Popular YA sub-genres include revisionist historical fiction by writers such as Jackie French, David Metzenthen and Anita Heiss; commercial fiction including pink books like Meg Cabot's *The Princess Diaries,* chick lit epitomised by Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones' Diary* (1996), Alison Rushby and Rebecca Sparrow, crime fiction by J.C. Burke and Gabrielle Lord, adventure/thrillers such as Anthony Horowitz's *Alex Rider* series, marketable young writers²⁰; verse novels²¹; and subversive fractured fairy tales by Jon Scieszka, David Wiesner and Gavin Bishop.

Topical publishing either exploits long term repeated, predictable topics such as Christmas or Ramadan or short term, opportunistic topics such as the Olympics. Current issues include: terrorism and war (in Morris Gleitzman's *Once and Then* (2009) or Sid Jacobsen's *The 9/11 Report a Graphic Novel* (2006)); refugees (in Robert Ingpen's *Ziba Came on a Boat* (2007) and John Marsden and Matt Ottley's *Home and Away* (2008)); environmentalism; health issues have driven a US Peter Rabbit Naturally Better campaign with healthy food choices from Peter

¹⁸ International Licensing Industry Merchandisers Association (LIMA) [http://www.licensing.org/] Consultation: June 2010.

¹⁹ Random House US made Philip Pullman a blockbuster with a \$250,000 marketing budget, releasing *The Golden Compass* in several imprints.

²⁰ Alex Adornetto, Jack Heath, Tristan Bancks.

²¹ Australian writers: Steven Herrick, Catherine Bateson, Margaret Wild, Michelle A Taylor, Tim Sinclair, Elizabeth Fensham, Irini Savvides.



Rabbit Organics²²; globalism's influence on fashion appears in Westerfeld (2004) and others; politics ('Obamarabilia' has developed with books and merchandise²³); contemporary fads²⁴; books about celebrities²⁵; books challenging gender stereotypes; or addressing cultural diversity.

Trends in Narrative Format

More attention is paid to design to appeal to a visually literate generation, packaging of children's books is less sedate and mass market techniques such as foil cover lettering are used. Magazine style formats conveying information in bites with stories and visuals juxtaposed, was evinced in the original non-fiction pioneered by Dorling Kindersley²⁶ but non-fiction is being challenged by online information, making its future increasingly tenuous²⁷. Non-traditional arrangement of elements in design; experimental typography and hand lettering; and visual texts are common. Comics use a graphic vocabulary of speech balloons, think bubbles, captions, and sound effects and there are several types: superheroes, humour, crime, aliens, horror/ supernatural, romance, fantasy, action/adventure, or contemporary issues. Many are spinoffs from, or generate television or films; there are 3 D comics, and picture books incorporate comic

²² When Annie's Homegrown Naturals added book character Arthur to their white-cheddar mac-and-cheese product, sales doubled, and they've expanded the license, developed a book club to help promote literacy and have two limited edition original Arthur stories on their boxes. Healthy publishing is also light-heartedly represented by Andy Griffiths' *Fast Food and No Play Make Jack a Fat Boy* (2006).

²³ First Dog by Patrick Lewis, Beth Zappitello and Tim Bowers (Sleeping Bear Press, 2009), Bo: America's Commander in Leash by Naren Aryal and Danny Moore (Mascot Books, 2009), Mama Voted for Obama! by Jeremy Zilber and Greg Bonnell (Jeremy Zilber, 2008), Yes We Can: a Biography of Barack Obama by Garen Thomas (Feiwel & Friends, 2008), Barack Obama 101 My First Presidential Board Book by Brad M. Epstein (Michaelson Entertainment, 2009), Barack Obama Son of Promise, Child of Hope by Nikki Grimes and Bryan Collier (Simon & Schuster, 2008), Obama's Pyjamas by Jeff Nave and Barry Lane (AuthorHouse, 2008), Thanks and Have Fun Running the Country Kids Letters to Obama edited by Jory John (McSweeney's, 2009), Barack by Jonah Winter and A.G Ford (Katherine Tegen Books, 2008). The former Australian PM has since commissioned Jasper and Abbie and the Great Australia Day Kerfuffle by Kevin Rudd and Rhys Muldoon illustrated by Carly Zapel (Allen and Unwin, 2010).

²⁴ *My Beautiful Mommy* written by plastic surgeon Dr Michael Salzhauer to help 'moms' seeking surgery to share the information with their kids, released by Big Tent Books in time for Mother's Day 2009.

²⁵ Such as Cathy Freeman, Muhammad Ali, Alex Rodriguez Michael Phelps.

²⁶ Other non-fiction series include Terry Deary's *Horrible Histories* (Scholastic) and Allen & Unwin's *It's True* series.

²⁷ Encarta have superceded the encyclopedia.



strip formats too²⁸. Graphic novels are sophisticated one volume comic stories, now being studied in schools and read widely, which include original tales, new versions of classics (eg *The Little Prince*), or modern texts (eg *Twilight*), and non-fiction²⁹. Original graphic novels were evinced by Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* series of 75 comics from 1989-1996 (DC Comics)³⁰. *The Watchmen* series by Alan Moore, artist Dave Gibbons and colorist John Higgins in a limited edition 12 book comic series (DC Comics, 1986 and 1987) became a novel and film franchise which critiqued the superhero concept in a darker way, typical of this genre. Many publishers now have graphic novel imprints (eg Scholastic US's *Graphix*, Roaring Brook Press's *First Second*, Indi-comics publisher NBM's *Paperpcutz*)³¹, are distributed by specialist outlets³² and promoted by some bookshops. The 2007 Michael L. Printz Award went to *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang, and there are many original texts³³ some marketed to adults³⁴. Anime and Manga are widely popular in Japan³⁵ and hugely influential on western culture³⁶, but Kelts' *Japanamerica* (2006) suggests that western appropriation and commercial conservatism threatens to stifle Anime's creativity.

Retro Publishing of nostalgic looking books³⁷ has links to gift market trends – cocooning, collecting and cross-merchandising (Woudstra, 1996), spearheaded by aging baby boomers. Cocooning consumers retreat to and purchase things to enhance the home. Collecting and "much

²⁸ For example, Terry Denton's work with Andy Griffiths, Lane Smith's work with Jon Scieszka.

²⁹ The first printed usage of the now common term was in Will Eisner's *A Contract with God: A Graphic Novel* (1978), although some would argue that Hergé's *Tin Tin*, Goscinny and Uderzo's *Asterix*, and Raymond Briggs's works fall into the graphic novel genre too.

³⁰ Gaiman has since collaborated with Dave McKean on several graphic novels.

³¹ Allen & Unwin and Hachette in Australia produce them, albeit on a small literary scale.

³² Australian companies Sealight Graphics and Madman Comics, and Madman Manga (a division of Madman Entertainment).

³³ By Satrapi, Talbot, Sherman, Lutes, Petersen, Tan, Rogers, Greenberg, Ottley and Rogers.

³⁴In *Blue Pills* Frederic Peeters (transl. Anjali Singh, Houghton Mifflin, 2008) tells of his partner Cati's discovery that she and her three year old son are HIV Positive.

³⁵ Where artists like Osamu Tezuka created Astro Boy.

³⁶ With artists like Australian Queenie Chan published by Tokyo Pop in LA. There are also Manga to download on mobile phones.

³⁷ Such as Con & Hal Igguelden's *The Dangerous Book for Boys* (2006).



of our current love of fantasy is determined by nostalgia... a society craving for either transformation or escape – or both. Harry Potter was ideal... it's an escape to the literary *past*" (Macleod, 2003). Retro publishing is also created by artists such as Shaun Tan or Lane Smith paying homage to historical design. Finally, retro publishing stems from marketing departments, keen to repackage classics, as gift books incorporating paper engineering, holograms, mobiles or dolls houses, re-packaged as board books³⁸, or miniature boxed sets of picture books in a supermarket saturated with product.

Trends in Narrative Style

Readers familiar with filmic narratives demand texts in which narrative conventions are overturned, structures are less fixed, often including a mixture of past, present and future tense using flashbacks and conflicting narratives. Diaries or first person accounts by writers such as Joanne Horniman and Martine Murray recreate the actuality of experience, and unreliable narrators such as Justine Larbelestier's *Liar* (2009) show how fallible the personal perspective can be. Dual and multiple narrative voices contribute to a more complex reading of action and intention eg David Metzenthen's *Boys of Blood and Bone* (2003). Some authors such as Earls and Sparrow (2007), and Bancks and Deckert (2009) have collaborated in writing alternate chapters. Simultaneous action, a norm in television plotting, has become common, and shifts in narrative person occur from first to third and even second eg Ian Bone's *Song of the Innocent Bystander* (2002) provocatively assumes a reader used to dealing with anomalies.

New Technology

The exponential adoption of new technology and social media has changed publishing, book production, and design and illustration, which are often done on screen. Artists speak of this as liberating and of the need to "break the paper habit and let digital be digital" (Gralley, 2006). Electronic book content is sold in three main formats: "Ebook retail and library supply, digital aggregators: supplying libraries, and licensing book content" (Weiss, 2007). It's predicted that e-book revenue will rise in 2010 (Epps and McQuivey, 2009). Ebooks are read on

³⁸ Publishers such as Little Hare Books in Australia produce international editions in order to make such techniques viable; Hinkler Books, Funtastic and Peter Haddon are producing such novelties for the mass market.



computers, ebook readers³⁹, and also phones which may be the future ebook readers since kids are adept at media multi-tasking⁴⁰. The Audiobook market is healthy, Print-on-Demand (POD) is more viable, as are Online libraries and Ebookstores. Authors are connecting with their readers via eMarketing on *MySpace*, twitter, downloads to mobiles, web chats, blog reviews, and Book Trailers posted on Youtube. Children are adopting avatars on second life or virtual world websites such as Club Penguin⁴¹, and are not only writing, but acting, in imagined stories online.

Future Tense

Most children are digital natives, and even for their parents, the iPod moment seems to have arrived. We'll see more adaption, and publishers will need to be flexible in order to survive. Trends will include non-traditional sales; online delivery of twitterature via multi-function devices; emarketing; niche publishing; visual texts such as Manga; environmental issues; and more 'big' books which dare to be different in format, style, and theme. Original creators begin trends, affirming a penchant for saying things in a unique voice. Trends do matter, though, for if creators are out of touch with changes in the market and technology, they might find themselves being 'so yesterday' that it really hurts their prospects. However, just as readers universally applaud Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963), Armin Greder's *The Island* (2007) will be an equally enduring measure of what the picture book can be. Future trends will reflect global media influence on publishing, but so will creative originality, as it always has. When something sets trends, people remember it. It is 'so tomorrow' – forever.

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³⁹ Amazon.com has its Kindle, Sony and KoboBooks have readers, and now the iPad has appeared.

⁴⁰ Five of the ten bestselling fictions in Japan in 2007 were cellphone novels.

⁴¹ Club Penguin developed by Club Penguin Entertainment (formerly New Horizon Interactive), launched in October 2005. By late 2007 it had 12 million user accounts and Walt Disney purchased New Horizon in August 2007 for \$350 million. It's now a trademark of Disney Online Studios Canada Inc. Nicktropolis, launched in 2007, introduces kids to Nickelodeon characters, and had over 8 million users, but was recently shut down, and is set for major re-development. Habbo.com, a Finnish site begun in 2000 by the Sulake Corporation is a 'hangout for teens' accessed in 32 countries; in June 2008 it had over 118 million registered.



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