

**CURRENT NEWS ON  
PUBLISHING**



# **CURRENT NEWS ON PUBLISHING**

**TANYA NGUYEN**

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My name is Tanya the creator of this eBook for the course LIS 541 Publishing at the School of Library Information Studies (SLIS) at the University of Alberta. I am a second year SLIS student and my interests lies in the science discipline, diversity and inclusion,



knowledge management and LIS research. Each chapter will focus on a unique topic in the publishing world with embedded links to current news articles, videos, and podcasts, followed by my own thoughts and ideas.

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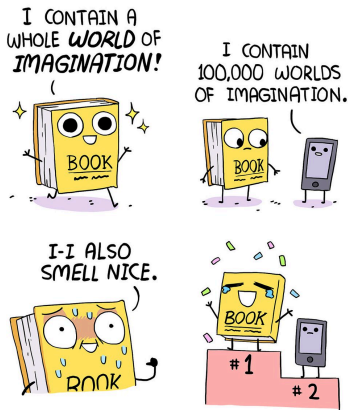


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1.

## DIGITAL REVOLUTION



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For this chapter, I found an article about Americans' book-reading habits which included some surveys from the Pew Research Center and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) that compared print and e-book trends and possible implications.

The Pew Research Center did a report called Book Reading 2016 and one of the main findings is

that **print is still a popular medium among readers** than e-Books. However, there are concerns around the decline in readership or literary reading as reported by NEA. They reported that in 2015 about 43% of adults read at least one literature for pleasure, and this about a 15% drop since the survey began in 1982. This decline of reading any literature including novels, poems, plays, short stories, and excluding work and school, has ramifications for trade publishers (Albanese, 2016). Also, the Pews Research Center found that the average number of books read dropped from 14 in 2011 to 12 books on average since the survey was conducted.

I found this news article interesting because they briefly mentioned some reading statistics in libraries. About 64% of people will check out books compared to 29% of users that use the computers at the library. Thus, checking out physical copies is still alive and well in libraries. Also, about 44% of users are not aware of electronic formats. So there is still a lack of awareness of what types of formats are available for library users. There are many more statistics and some may seem positive (i.e. print sales still dominant) or negative (i.e. decline in readership) depending on one's interpretation. In my opinion, it's not necessarily the format of reading that matters as much, but the fact that less people are reading is unfortunate, as reading is such an important skill to have and develop. Gioia, NEA chairman succinctly compared the difference between reading and other entertainment mediums in his statement:

“Reading a book requires a degree of active attention and engagement. Indeed, reading itself is a progressive skill that

depends on years of education and practice. By contrast, most electronic media such as television, recordings, and radio make fewer demands on their audiences, and often require no more than passive participation.”

I really liked this statement because when I compare my current self to when I was a high school student, I know my reading choices and my habits have changed. I would say I look more critically at what I read by asking questions and actually hunting for the original sources.

In summary, the digital revolution has opened up the ways we can access information due in part to the development of the World Wide Web and new technologies. As librarians being aware what formats people are reading (ie. print, online) and why users read or do not read, can help us develop literacy programs so that no one falls behind in reading literacy.

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## **DIGITAL TURN IN A CANADIAN CONTEXT**

Canada's copyright law was updated in 2012 and will be amended in 2017, which brought in changes to clamp down on piracy, a positive direction for the publishing industry (Williams & Godfrey, 2015). The publishing companies however have mixed reactions towards the changes to the Fair Dealing Guidelines because education was included to the list of materials (satire, parody, private study, research, and news reporting) that can be freely reproduced (Williams & Godfrey, 2015). Under the Fair Dealing Guidelines this means students, teachers, professors or anyone using materials for educational purposes can "reproduce up to 10% or one chapter of a published work as well as newspaper and magazine articles without compensating the author" (Williams &

Godfrey, 2015). In short, they do not pay royalties (Williams & Godfrey, 2015).

What I found interesting about this article is the publishers perspectives towards the changes to Canada's copyright laws. Many of the publishers agree that adding education to fair dealing results in a loss of licensing revenue. PricewaterhouseCoopers estimates that large publishing companies will have to make an additional 24 million in sales "each year to make up for the loss in licensing revenue"(Williams & Godfrey, 2015). Not only is the publishing sector suffering but also the education sector, which saw Oxford Press University pull out of K-12 division due to the Fair Dealing Guidelines and loss in licensing revenue (Williams & Godfrey, 2015). According to Wooldridge, Canadian education will be impacted because as Canadian publishers such as Oxford Press University continue to close, educators will turn to purchasing educational materials from the United States. I think this is quite alarming because how do educators teach the Canadian curriculum if educational materials published in the U.S. are purchased? However, even in post-secondary institutions, many required textbooks are published in the U.S., so there is already a lack of Canadian materials published for higher education. But this can also be due to the fact that the U.S. publishes way more materials than Canada does.

Just to tie in the author's perspectives, I found two short excerpts from Canadian authors who wrote about how the Canada's copyright law impacted them. Dolman (2016) is a fiction and poet writer who said that publishing works online makes them much more searchable and accessible, but faces losses in "revenue through copyright." Hutsell-

Manning (2016), a fiction writer for 35 years comments on the challenges to earn an income as a writer because of the changes to copyright. She states that writers are important to society, as they are the “reflection of conscience, recorders of life.”

Copyright is quite a complex law in Canada and I am very interested to see the changes in 2017 because this will affect libraries too. In our profession I think we need to be aware that everyone is impacted by copyright including publishers, authors, artists, students, etc. and to create a balanced law that makes everyone happy is a challenging task for the Government of Canada.

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## **NEW MEDIA INDUSTRIES AND NEWS**





Source: [https://pbs.twimg.com/media/Cuub\\_IPWEAAAtVf.jpg](https://pbs.twimg.com/media/Cuub_IPWEAAAtVf.jpg)

This chapter will focus on **subscription services** and some unique business models for publishing companies. The first article discusses the selling of fiction genre which makes up “4.4% of all print sales” but “a whopping 45% on all ebook sales” in the United States (Kirk, 2016). Though fiction genre is selling well as digital copies, it’s quite cumbersome to shop for books online (Kirk, 2016). Online shoppers looking for a specific genre have to jump through several subcategories before finding what they are looking for. Kirk (2016) describes the online shopping page as “a clickable catalogue dump of all books ever

create,” but genre fiction users muster through it anyways. Even though this old retail system is doing a disservice for online shoppers, there are some interesting apps and businesses out there that curate to the reader’s interest. One in particular is an app called Novellic, a book club app that started in London which uses various multimedia tools like polls for what to read next, discussion forums, and “offline meet ups with organizers” (DWB, 2016). Novellic uses a **curation engine** and the “human element of book clubs” so that books of interest will find their way to you as opposed to Amazon where readers have to hunt for good books by people’s book reviews (DWB, 2016).

I found this article interesting because I never knew there was such a thing called “book hangover.” And I do feel a bit of a book hangover after finishing a book series and having to wait for the next book to be ordered from the library. It would great to read if someone has similar thoughts about a novel through a discussion forum like Novellic. Novellic offers a way for book readers to immediately share their thoughts and also meet with these people in person. It’s such a great idea to keep a book discussion going and a great way for others to recommend similar readings. I wonder if it’s possible for libraries to take up this model of curating to users. Edmonton Public Libraries does a bit of this as you can follow other library users. University of Alberta libraries doesn’t really seem to have ways for users to share their reading experiences online, but would be helpful for those with a particular research area or reading interest to find others with similar reading tastes.

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## SELF-PUBLISHING

I chose self-publishing as the topic to research on, as I don't know anything about it besides purchasing digital copies from an author living in Japan who went back and forth between Amazon and Kickstarter to sell her comics.



Screenshot for a comic book Kickstarter project.

I watched a bit of a video from a Tech Forum conference from 2013 which I think is a great overview for those new to publishing. Rebecca Albani from Bowker shared the survey results completed from self-publishing companies that U.S. and Canadian authors may self-publish with. In the U.S., the statistics show that when authors choose to self-publish eBooks sales are much greater than print.

And the top five online self-publishing companies are Smashwords, Author Solutions, Lulu Enterprises Inc., Bookbaby, MintRight at the time of the survey. The top three book awareness sources which are how readers find books are: reading an online excerpt about the books, retail recommendations, and customer reviews, all of which self-published authors have control of.

Rebecca also touched upon the services that are Canadian self-publishing companies offer to authors. Only six Canadian self-publishing companies participated in the survey but it does shed some light in self-publishing realm. All Canadian self-publishers surveyed said they provide production services such as “print on demand, short run printing, colour printing, and Ebook conversion.” A majority would still provide the pre-publishing services such as copy editing/proofreading, title or chapter header recommendations, project management. The other major services that most would offer are “metadata services (ISBN supplied, barcode), distribution services (print distribution to trade, Ebook distribution to trade), and marketing services (marketing copy).

Douglas Gibson spoke about his experiences as a publisher, author and publishing a self-published author ‘traditionally publish’ his self-published books. Gibson lists the three things that publishers have to offer to authors that make traditional publishing enticing. First, traditional publishers offer objectivity or what is known as the curatorial role. Self-published out there can only “offer subjective praise on their books” whereas publishers have chosen your book out of sea of thousands of books. Second, traditional publishers assure authors

that the publishers take care of all the publishing business and let authors focus on writing. According to some self-publishing studies, taking care of the publishing business can take up 50 percent of the time that could be used for writing. Last, publishers offer editing services that are welcomed by even experienced writers. Unfortunately traditional publishers are cutting their editorial time which Gibson said is a mistake and they should be “add[ing] value for these professional writers.”

So much of tech session was new to me and interesting. I guess my take away from it was when Gibson posed the question to traditional publishers, “what areas of joint control are you willing to give up?” And I think no longer can traditional publishers and self-publishers ignore each other. I think we need to give authors more control or say in the design of the book and how they want to promote their work. For librarians I think we also need to support self-publishers the best we can by purchasing print and online copies and educating library users about self-publishing books too.

My colleague Chris self-published a nonfiction, hardcover about a legendary reggae artist:  
<http://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/books/edmonton-author-pays-tribute-to-legendary-jamaican-artist-limonious>

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## SCHOLARLY REPUTATION AND SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING

The article I read is about creating a feasible business model for open access (OA) monographs. It compares two types of publishing models for monographs: the legacy publishing model and library coalitions with publishers also known as an integrated model. The **legacy publishing model** is basically where publishers make income by primarily selling a couple hundred of copies (around 200-400 copies) to academic libraries. They do make money under this model however if we look at just only a few hundred copies sold, then it's not very accessible to users. This is why the legacy publishing model is considered a "good business [but] bad



dissemination.” In addition, the fees for publishing monographs are extremely expensive ranging anywhere from \$16,000 to over \$100,000 to publish a digital monograph. Unless researchers have grants to cover the publication costs, or most of all the costs, the legacy model is just not very feasible for academic researchers.

Hence, the Open Book Publishers (OBP), a non-for-profit publishing company applied an integrated model to offset all costs to the authors. How it works is that they use three sources of revenue to pay for producing the monograph. Both legacy publishing and integrated models use sales to generate revenue but publishing grants are another source of revenue in the integrated model . So sales and publishing grants brings in just over 80% of revenue to cover the publishing costs, the remaining costs are covered through library membership fees which are about \$500 per library. For one year, OBP has successfully produced 18 monographs free of charge to authors. Gatti & Mierowsky (2016) stated that “sales revenue alone is not sufficient to cover our costs, and the existence of publishing grants and the financial support received from library membership has been absolutely critical for our financial viability.”

I found this article interesting and new as I did not know the costs for producing monographs was so high and the sales are very small. With digital OA monographs, they have shown that “an average of 5,000 readers” access the monographs. I like the idea of having libraries taking a role in supporting publishers and authors in the pre-publication stage as opposed to post-publication. Thus, libraries should take an active role in publishing (Gatti & Mierowsky, 2016).

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6.

## TRADE BOOK RETAILING

The podcast by BookNet Canada interviewed two Canadian publishers, Sarah MacLachlan from House of Anansi and Meghan MacDonald from Penguin Random House, about the decision that went into building brick-and-mortar bookstores in

Canada. MacLachlan stated that House of Anansi has always had a strong online presence and having a physical space puts a face to the publisher's name that people can associate with. Opening this space allows them to do book launches and have educational workshops. The space allows them to connect with people on a personal level.

MacDonald claims that opening a bookstore was a way



for them to do three things and sales was not the first reason. The first goal was to do a brand extension, as the orange penguin logo is very trusted and recognizable on books. The next was to do product experimentation, so the space would be an area to test out ideas before launching it across Canada. The last goal is to generate sales, as they stock both books and merchandises for sale.

I enjoyed listening to the podcast and the bookstore interior designs are so chic and inviting. I think it's actually a wise idea to have a physical space for publishers and authors to interact with the customers. Publishers can see who the customers are and engage in conversations that they wouldn't have otherwise. I think the Edmonton Public Libraries do an excellent job at brand marketing and they also sell merchandise including t-shirts, bottles, pens, etc. I agree with MacLachlan that people move around they don't just shop for things online. People will come visit physical stores and libraries because books are tactile things that we still want to hold in our hands and flip through the pages.

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7.

## **DISTRIBUTION AND DISCOVERY**

This article references a study by Iwana & Uchida (2016) in which they trained a neural network to recognize a book cover and categorize its genre (Emerging Technology, 2016). The research design involved downloading 137,766 book covers from Amazon.com along with the the first top genre/category for each book. Then they used 80% of the dataset to train the neurons to recognize the genre along with the book cover. Another 10% of the dataset was used to validate the model and the remaining 10% to test its categorization for book covers it has not seen. In summary, it made the correct categorization more than 20% of the time, and 40% of the time the correct genre was its top 3 choices (Emerging Technology, 2016). The algorithm performed the best at identifying travel, and computer and technology books, since the book design

in these categories are similar and consistent. Cookbooks were categorized correctly when food pictures are on the covers, but not when there was “a picture of the chef” (Emerging Technology, 2016). Biographies and memoirs were confused as history however, history is considered the second category on Amazon for these types of books. Finally, children books were confused for graphic novels and comics.

Emerging Technology (2016) predicted that in the future machines could be used to design cover books. Iwana & Uchida (2016) mentioned that a future study could include comparing humans and artificial intelligence’s ability to judge a book’s genre. I also wonder if there is a way to tie these neural networks to aid in the discovery of materials online, such as searching a book by its cover.

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## 8.

# SPECIALITY PUBLISHING



Source: <http://bit.ly/code4lib2016>

The article, “As I see it! – emerging trends in textbooks – libraries will feel the effect,” was pulled from the Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA) and is a bit dated as it was published in 2008, but the

issues around textbook publishing from eight years ago are still present today. The article though written in the U.K. still mentions textbook trends that are similarly felt in Canada and U.S., such as the fact that print textbook sales are diminishing due to information freely available on the Internet, and the recycling of second-hand textbooks. Students can also save costs by using their

instructor's PowerPoint slides and googling their answers online.

In foresight, the article mentioned that textbooks publishers will focus on textbooks with multi-functional tools. Currently online textbooks are in fact embedded with videos and links, and the ability to mark-up pages with notes and highlights. In addition, they mentioned about a small number of free textbook are available online. Now, I believe these textbooks are part of what we call open access (OA) or open educational resources (OER). I went to code4libe and Erik Christensen provided us several online links (see slides) to search for OER textbooks. For example, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology offers the notes, syllabi, and textbooks for all their courses. OER textbooks are a great resource for users who can't afford textbooks, but Cox (2008) believes will pose a threat to textbook publishers. As far as I know I don't think OER textbooks are a threat. The problem is the cost to publish to sell textbooks are rising and users will look for other ways to find cheap or free textbooks. Unless textbook publishers provide fair and reasonable costs, users will look continue to look elsewhere online for resources.

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