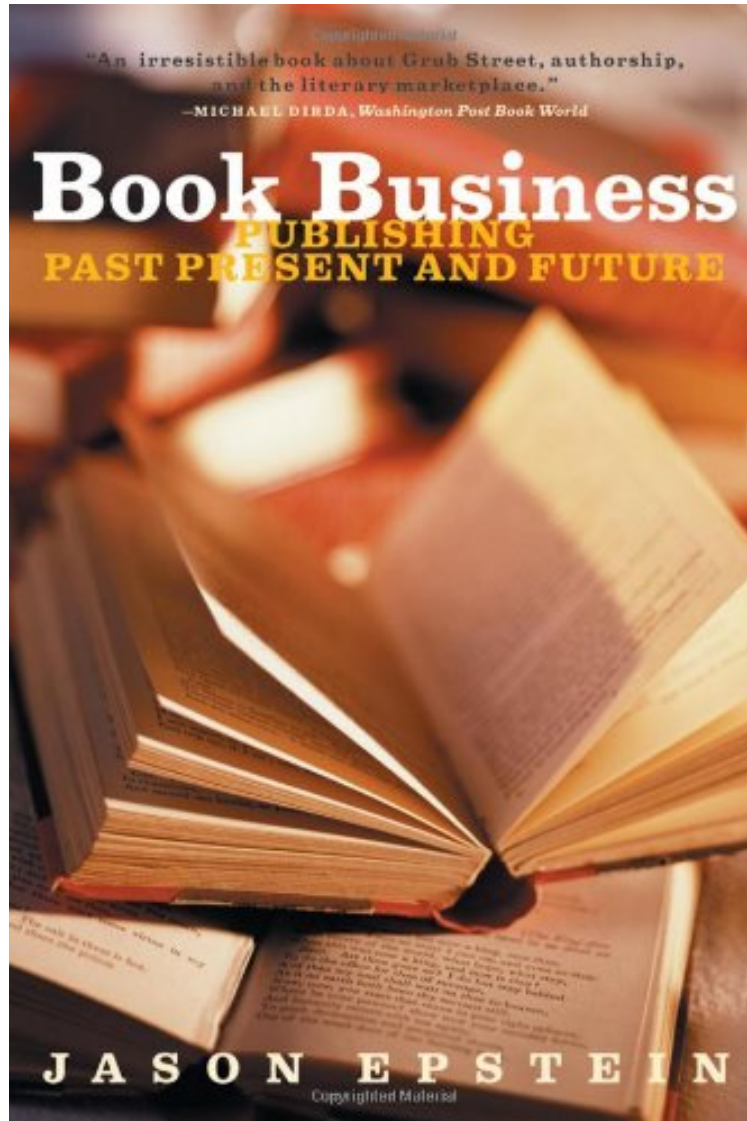


(Free pdf) Book Business: Publishing Past, Present, and Future

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

Jason Epstein

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#1187399 in Books Jason Epstein 2002-01-17 2012-11-19 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.30 x .60 x 5.60l, .45 #File Name: 0393322343208 pages Book Business Publishing Past Present and Future | File size: 47.Mb

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

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A semi-optimistic perspective from a veteran bookmaker By Charles S. Houser Publishing is a notoriously conservative, unprofitable, non-linear line of business. The most fascinating parts of Epstein's book are his accounts of how he did something a little differently ("thought outside the box," to use a

current cliché) and helped create something truly innovative and worthwhile--like quality paperbacks (Anchor Books) and the Library of America (uniform editions of carefully edited American classics on acid-free paper). While this book is essentially an extended essay on where publishing is going (as publishing houses become lesser components in larger media companies, and author advances for the turner-outers of blockbuster titles sap publishers of their resources and makes them unwilling to take risks on more significant literary voices), there are some interesting portraits of key figures from publishing's past, such as Horace Liveright, Bennett Cerf, and Donald Klopfer. His key thesis, that the future of publishing lay in being able to obtain printed books on demand from ATM-like kiosks, is both hopeful and scary. It means that there will be no need for any title to ever go out of print, no matter how limited its audience. (Hopeful.) But will books produced in this manner be as satisfying to read, hold, and collect as any single title in the Library of America? (Scary.)

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Look into the past to understand today, the future

By Richard Jason Epstein paints a picture of the transition of the book publishing and selling trade as it transitioned from independent book sellers and publishers to today's fully-optimized book trade. He also discusses the imminent eBooks revolution (from the early 2000 perspective) and sheds light on the reasons why it was successful. A quick, enjoyable read, and definitely one worth reading if you want to understand the recent history of the book business from the insider perspective.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Not comprehensive, but wise

By Debbie Lee Wesselmann People looking for a comprehensive history and analysis of the publishing industry should look elsewhere; however, those intrigued by glimpses inside will enjoy **BOOK BUSINESS**. Epstein's strength and weakness here are one: this is a personal book. He ruminates on his experience as an editor and how it reflects the business as a whole. The anecdotes he collects are filtered through his impassioned eye, and his predictions are heavily based on what he has seen and known, not on the advice of other experts. The book's relatively loose structure is reminiscent of an intimate conversation. Is this bad? It depends on what you want. I found it refreshing and enjoyable, especially given the book's brevity. **BOOK BUSINESS** is a warm appraisal of a business close to the author's heart, and you won't find a more loving tribute to the art of book publishing.

"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.

.com 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 Review 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

From Publishers Weekly

In October 1999, Epstein, former editorial director of Random House, delivered a series of lectures at the New York Public Library that galvanized the publishing world. This book is based on those lectures. A genuine elder statesman of the industry, Epstein has spent about 50 years in publishing, during which he helped create the "paperback revolution," the New York of Books and the Library of America. Here, short, magisterial chapters describe the recent past of American publishing through the lens of Epstein's career, and lookDnow fearfully, now hopefullyDat the spirit of book publishing to come. Epstein explains that, in his youth, the book trade was as much vocation as business, bringing to the world the fruits of literary modernism. In more recent decades, by contrast, investors and conglomerates, he says, seeking "name-brand authors" and economies of scale, have treated books as a product like any other. New technologies, however, might reverse these baleful (as seen by Epstein) trends. This forceful if hardly startling analysis introduces Epstein's compact and compelling reminiscences, which form the bulk of the book. Each chapter includes famous names (Auden, Nabokov, Edmund Wilson, Bennett Cerf, cyber-pioneer Norbert Weiner); revealing, amusing anecdotes; and clear accounts of who paid the bills for what, and how, and why. Most strikingly, Epstein looks forward to the "worldwide village green" the digital age might createDone in which books, he says, will keep a place, and publishing will "become once more a cottage industry of diverse, creative, autonomous" work, albeit at the expense of many of the middlemen who stand between author and reader, including today's big publishers. Congenial, erudite, electrifying, this book is a must read for anyone who cares about books and their business. (Jan. 15) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

Drawing on his W.W. Norton Lectures at the New York Public Library in October 1999, publishing giant Epstein considers what's wrong with the industry today. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.