The Structure of the Book Publishing Industry in Canada

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In his article "The Ethically Incomplete Editor," academic and former Senior Editor of Coach House Books Darren Wershler concludes with a bold call. If Canadian publishing is going to survive, he argues, "we need to imagine what it might be like to be editors who are also, improbably, both policy wonks and shit-disturbers" (238). With this call, Wershler reminds us that publishing lies at the strange intersection between deep investment in the value of books, an activist orientation towards imagining the world otherwise, and--improbably, as he says--a deep understanding of the cultural policies that underpins the industry's very existence, particularly in Canada.

It is at that improbable intersection that this volume lies. The cumulative work of the students of *The Structure of the Book Publishing Industry in Canada* in Simon Fraser University's Publishing program (PUB371), these essays represents a small community seeking to collectively understand the book publishing industry in Canada, with a focus on how we got here, where we are now, and where we're going next.

The order of this collection mirrors the organization of the course, which began with a brief history of book publishing in Canada--with a focus on shifting markets, technologies, and policies--before moving on to talk about cultural policy and why it matters (a hard sell, to be honest). The works gathered in PART ONE: THE HISTORY AND PRESENT OF CANADIAN BOOK PUBLISHING grapples with these topics, exploring Creative Canada's changes to Canada's arts funding model, mapping funding recipients in British Columbia, asking why Canadian authors may or may not want to stick around to make a go of it in our publishing scene, comparing the magazine and book publishing industries, and tracking the gradual concentration of publishing around a small number of multinationals. Together, they challenge us to the policy wonks Wershler calls for.

In PART TWO: MARKETING AND SELLING CANADIAN BOOKS, the contributions turn to the always-daunting task of building an audience for books published in Canada. From literary prizes to mass reading events like Canada Reads, the world of publishing is full of institutions meant to make books stand out in an increasingly saturated media landscape. Of course, scale has always been a problem in Canada, where both industry and audience are dwarfed by our neighbour to the South. These works, including essays, interviews, podcasts, and visual campaigns, boldly explore how new media can bolster reading for new generations, examine the role of celebrity endorsements and social media in promoting titles, and get into the nitty gritty of how Indigo, Canada's largest bookstore, decides what to put on its shelves. And lest we forget, some friendly muppets remind us of Harlequin's important but often-ignored role in the Canadian publishing landscape.

Technology and new media aren't just transforming trade publishing, however, but are also at the heart of debates around educational and scholarly publishing. The essays in PART THREE: EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING IN CANADA explore transformations in education publishing from three distinct but interlocking perspectives: transformations in technology, the shifting role of nationalism, and exclusions based in race and gender.

Always in the background of conversations about how the publishing industry is transforming is the question: what comes next? The works in PART FOUR: NEW PRACTICES IN CANADIAN PUBLISHING explore two different versions of this: self-publishing as an increasingly accessible means for authors to circumvent the entire publishing industry, and zine-making as a practice that recentres artists and their communities over the industrial scale of contemporary book publishing. While one practice is distinctly digital and the other profoundly analogue, put together these practices remind us that the status quo in publishing should never be mistaken for the inevitable.

It is against the inevitability of the status quo that the works in the final section argue. PART FIVE: DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY is comprised of essays, podcasts, and even a comic that tackle the systemic barriers to access that still plague the Canadian book publishing industry. Recalling Wershler's

insistence that we also become shit-disturbers, these contributions look at literary awards, the editorial process, and the demographics of the publishing industry as various signs that Canadian publishing, for all its seeming progressiveness, is in serious need of having its shit disturbed. Give the resistance to normalizing the present that these students' work demonstrates, I might be forgiven for ending this semester with a glimmer of optimism.

The sheer diversity and creativity of this collected volume--which we have been calling a book, understanding the slipperiness of that term in the 21st century--are a testament to two things: the remarkable work students will produce if set free from the essay as the only format in which to think about course materials, and the flexible potential of the Open Journal System for publishing student work. The peer-review, revision, editing, layout, and cataloguing of this work was managed through OJS, the PKP's journal management and publishing system. Working iteratively across the semester, students were able to further their understanding of the publishing industry by participating in a version of it. That so many opted for something other than an essay is no slight to the value of that form, but a reminder that there are many mediums in which thinking happens, and that education, like publishing itself, always benefits from trying new things.

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For further information about PKP and its software and publishing systems, contact Kevin Stranack, Head of Digital Publishing & Associate Director for Community Engagement and Learning at the Public Knowledge Project, Simon Fraser University Library, kstranac@sfu.ca

Works Cited

Darren Wershler, "The Ethically Incomplete Editor," in *Editing as Cultural Practice in Canada*, ed. Dean Irvine and Smaro Kamboureli (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016), 236–49, http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/chapter/1893339.

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