

Chapter 16

Looking Beyond Now in Publishing: The Print vs. Digital Debate – What Should Be the Focus Content or Platform?

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ABSTRACT

Due to digital revolution there has been a lot of development in the publishing industry, and this has also affected access to and dissemination of information. The issue about print and digital debate is now common everywhere. However, the question about what the focus should be, whether the content or the platform, is still yet to be answered. While some believe that digital revolution will continue giving room for digital publishing to thrive; others are saying that it is not the platform that matters but rather the contents that should be made available to the users when needed. This chapter discusses the historical background of digital publishing, digital publishing initiatives, advantages and disadvantages of digital publishing, challenges associated with digital publishing, the print and the digital debate, and looks at what the future holds for publishing.

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INTRODUCTION

Publishing has become one important phenomenon in the world. This is because the world is surviving on information which books provide. There are many individuals, groups and organizations involved in the business of providing different information through books and other printed materials. Publishing is an interesting course that touches all facets of information processing, storage and dissemination especially literacy, formal and informal education. It is therefore significant to all librarianship exercises.

It could be difficult to cultivate a generally accepted definition for publishing; several scholars have developed generic concepts and terms for the process of producing literary works. Oso and Biobaku (2008) explain that publishing is a generic term used to describe the process of producing literacy and information materials for utility. Also, Nyeko (1999) opines that; publishing is “the process of producing for dissemination, books, films, computer programmes, records, newspapers, periodicals, discs, bulletins, magazines and other literacy materials.” It is only when a manuscript has been transformed into a book and then distributed to its intended market place, that the process of publishing is complete. Lee (1979) defined publishing using its characteristics. According to him, there are three crucial components of book publishing. They are: book editing, book design, and book production. Contextually, we can conclude that book publishing is that process that seeks to capture social and intellectual activity and storing same for the information, education and entertainment of the society.

Okwilagwe (2001) quoted Chandler Grannis (1967) who define publishing as:

To make public – to send forth among the people – the words and pictures the creative minds have produced, that editors have worked over, and that printers have reproduced. Therefore, publishing is a process that involved creative minds who conceived ideas that want others to share. According to Okwilongwe (2001), Publishing is a process that consists of planning, selecting, editing, designing, producing, marketing and distribution of printed materials such as books, magazines and newspapers.

The demise of print has been famously predicted for years. In the early 1990s, Stakeholders of a major professional publisher announced that “print is dead.” To this credit, it was publicly recanted that statement several years later. Despite the incredible advances in digital technology and new opportunities for selling e-products, print sales have remained the bread and butter of almost all publishers. Print, however, is not the solid foundation it used to be. In recent years, most sectors have seen an overall decline in print sales, and though we are likely to see some variations over time, the overall downward trend does not seem likely to be reversed.

In the past, publishers have been known to be too casual about the preservation of files. In many cases, publishers paid almost no attention to archival storage, instead depending on third-party typesetters and printers to maintain our intellectual property. Even now, some smaller and midsize publishers are guilty of such dangerous practices.

THE PRINT VS. DIGITAL DEBATE

Nowadays, consumers are exposed to digital media at least as much as print. The growing prevalence of smart phones and tablets, and the wireless networks that connect them, mean that more and more folks

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