If we were to take a snapshot of the publishing world and communications, it would reveal that the way we communicate ideas is exploding far beyond the ability of any single source to control or monopolize it. It is a classic case of what you know is out of date in the moment that you know it.

This is true in every form of communication, from casual to the most structured, and those who do not accept and understand this new reality ignore it at their peril. Nowhere are those changes more profound than in the way we disseminate the written word.

As an example, let’s look at how a typical person has received information since Johannes Gutenberg made it possible for average people to own books. Before that time, books had to be hand-copied and were far beyond the reach of the masses. With the advent of printing, books became more affordable and the ideas they contained were no longer the sole province of the rich and powerful, but were available to anyone who had the price of a day’s wages. Printing gave rise to newspapers and periodicals, and the general population had access to news and ideas from other places, which ultimately transformed society and gave birth to the Industrial Revolution and the Age of Enlightenment. Although the dissemination of the printed word got incrementally faster, better and cheaper after the 15th century, it didn’t fundamentally change until the past 30 years or so, with the Internet, the World Wide Web, laptop computers, smart phones, tablets and e-readers.

As with many historic shifts in the past, the people who use technology have embraced it more quickly than much of the legacy interests that purport to serve them. Just as in the Gutenberg’s time, it’s seldom been easy or pleasant for those who control information to surrender their power to influence the populace. Many books, magazines and newspaper publishers continue to grapple with the fact that they are no longer the gatekeepers of information. But the genie is out of the bottle and it can never be put back in. What has caused this amazing revolution?

**DIGITAL PUBLISHING**

Over the past several years, traditional information gatekeepers have found themselves guarding a gate that increasingly fewer people are passing through. Instead, readers are bypassing the gate altogether and getting their information directly from the source or through information aggregators that customize their news according to readers’ interests. General-information daily newspapers have been hit very hard by technology that delivers the latest news in milliseconds rather than days or even hours. Who wants to read about what happened yesterday in a printed newspaper when you can get the latest information within minutes or less. Even magazines have resorted to publishing digital or e-zine editions of their formerly all-print magazines in an attempt to keep up.

But the most jarring and exciting changes are evolving in the book publishing industry.

For hundreds of years the book-publishing process remained virtually unchanged. Authors wrote and publishers decided whether their words would get published. Over the past century, the book publishing industry grew into a large, profitable and prestigious business, with the ancillary offshoots of agents, critics and thought leaders deciding what was “worthy” of being published.

The advent of e-books and self-publishing allows every writer in every genre to cheaply and easily take his or her ideas directly to the marketplace.
However, the new wave of digital publishing has made it clear that readers do not necessarily agree with what those institutions decide. The advent of e-books and self-publishing allows every writer in every genre to cheaply and easily take his or her ideas directly to the marketplace, completely bypassing the traditional publishing establishment. In this climate, a young waitress from the Midwest who was turned down by the traditional media elites could self-publish her own e-book and sell a million copies!

Will the current trend in ever-increasing migration to e-publishing continue? In 10 years, will any brick and mortar book store even exist? And most important, will the printed book go the way of the dodo and be relegated to decorative collections or literary knick-knacks?

Let’s take a look at the way books have been sold for the past 400 years.

THE BOOKSTORE

For centuries, every major city and town had at least one bookstore, and until a few years ago they kept increasing, with huge chains dominating the corner book shop and even big box retailers getting into the act. And since people chose their books by going into the bookstore and browsing the shelves, publishers directed all of their sales and marketing efforts at driving traffic to bookstores through massive publicity campaigns, *New York Times*-style book reviews, special floor displays and author book signings. For decades, publishers and book chains could afford to ignore advances in technology such as e-books and print on demand. But now, with the advent of digital publishing and the almost overnight success of e-readers starting with the Kindle, brick and mortar bookstores have become a disappearing relic of a bygone age.

E-books have actually been around for a decade, although most people hardly noticed. They were the province of small specialty publishers without much capital and struggling authors who had failed to make the “A” list with the big traditional publishers. For years, these shunned authors made scant inroads here and there with younger readers and techno-geeks who carried their entire existence on their computer. The average person could not be bothered reading an entire book from a PDF downloaded onto a big desktop or even laptop computer. When I asked a friend once if he was going to try out e-books, he replied, “Call me back when you can take your computer to the beach.”
Here are a few “Dos and Don’ts” on promotion and publishing for authors who are considering signing with a publisher or might be thinking of trying self-publishing.

**DO** research meticulously each publisher or self-publishing provider that you are considering.

**DON’T** ever sign up with a publisher or self-publisher without checking with authors who have used them.

**DO** take advantage of online information and evaluation sites such as “Editors and predators” to check out the ratings of publishers, both traditional, e-pub and self-publishing, as well as agents.

**DON’T** sign up for expensive add-ons from self-publishing companies, as most of their ancillary marketing programs cost thousands of dollars and consist of things that you could and should do better yourself.

**DO** make sure that you have a professional-looking website with links to all of your books and writing credentials.

**DON’T** expect any publisher or agent to promote your book to the extent it will need to be successful unless your last name is Rowling, Clancy or “Snookie” (whatever her last name is).

**DO** approach your favorite bookstore for a book signing and most definitely **Do** assure them that you will do all the of the necessary promotion work to drive traffic to your event.

**DON’T** accept any contract for self-publishing that sets the price of your book above what other books of the length and genre of yours sell for. There are some self-publishers whose business model sets the price of their books far above the market prices. It’s hard to be successful if your 200-page book is priced $24.95 when comparables are selling for $14.95.

**DO** read every publishing contract carefully and be especially vigilant as to the length and terms of the contract—particularly for e-books. Remember, the cost of producing an e-book leaves much more room for profit and unlike print books, e-books never have to go out of print. So you could find yourself still selling a good e-book 50 years from now!

**DON’T** wait until your book is published to start sending out review copies in the form of ARCs for print or PDFs for e-books.

**DO** make use of cross-promotion by linking your social media, blogs, website and in-person events. And reach out to other authors with offers of shared events and guest blogging.

**DON’T** ever think you’ve done enough and that you can just sit back and coast. How long should you keep promoting? How long do you want to keep selling books?

**And the most important Do of all…** Do **Always believe in yourself and everyone else will too!**

---

**Ric Wasley**

---

**ENTER THE KINDLE AND THE TABLETS**

Old habits die hard… or do they?

When I teach my classes on marketing for writers, I usually ask my students for a show of hands about who has an e-reader and who still prefers printed books. It should come as no surprise that the majority of people under 40 are migrating to e-books while the vast majority of those over 50 still love their printed books (the 40- to 50-year-old demo seems split). What does this portend for the bookstore and the printed word? Are we doomed to a future in which the number of printed books reverts to the equivalent of a few precious scrolls in a medieval monastery?

Hardly.

Printed books will remain, but without their former primacy as the major purveyor of the written word. Just as photographs didn’t replace paintings, the printed book will not vanish. By the same token, just like photographs did replace woodcuts and line illustrations in magazines and newspapers, traditional publishing will have little choice but to adapt to the new media. The cost of paper, printing and distribution will continue to place pressure on profit margins, but in the end it will be technology and changing consumer habits that will force printed news mediums to evolve the way they deliver their product.

---

**READERS AND WRITERS**

Technology is also changing how authors connect with their readers. Until now, most authors have been content to sit for an occasional book signing or library talk. But all that has changed with the emergence of e-books and digital media.

Publishers have fewer and fewer dollars for marketing and invest the little they do have in the 10% of authors who earn 90% of their revenue. So at all levels, from large to small publishers—and especially in self-publishing—authors must become their own marketers.

Fortunately, the same technology that makes e-books and self-publishing possible...
is more than a catch phrase. Sustainability
Anderson & Vreeland has practiced environmental
responsibility long before it became fashionable. Over the past 50 years we have introduced new
products and technologies that have continually
improved flexo plate quality and efficiency while
reducing the impact we have on our planet.
Our products are designed to use less material,
ship with smaller packaging, be free of many
toxic substances, while being as energy efficient
and recyclable as possible.
Sustainability in some organizations is some-
thing new – something learned. At Anderson &
Vreeland, it’s been part of our culture for 50 years.
And then, of course, there is social media.
I recently attended a local meeting of all
types of businesspeople and entrepre-
neurs that focused on ways to use Twitter
to promote a business and find new cus-
tomers. This is a whole new concept in mar-
keting that taps into what started out as a
quick, casual way for friends to keep in
touch. But these new tools and apps can
help marketing-savvy authors find and fol-
low current and new prospects for their
work, and technology such as special
Twitter Dashboard tools, relevant content
streams and new metric tools can help
gauge how effectively a writer is connect-
ing with readers.

MEDIARICH BOOKS
And that is only the beginning. The very
nature of the book is evolving. Some
e-books can be interactive with the reader,
allowing the reader to input information
into the book that will change the outcome
of the story. Experiments that marry digital
media with technology continue to prolifer-
ate, mashing up music, animation, 3-D
graphics and video until it’s hard to tell
where a book ends and a video game
begins. Perhaps that will be the future of the
book: not merely to be read once and sit on
a shelf, but to be a constantly mutating,
interactive device that merges the author’s
story with the digital skill of programmers.
The result might be a story or learning
experience that can be explored over and
over again, limited only by the reader’s
interest and imagination.
The possibilities are endless, and as
personal media-connected devices
continue to evolve, the opportunities
for authors to reach an audience through
e-readers, tablets and smart phones
will only increase. In fact, the convergence
of these devices is already under way.
For instance, we gave our daughter the
new Kindle Fire for Christmas and
even though she has a laptop and smart-
phone, she is already using the new
e-reader as hybrid between an e-reader
and computer.

So is there a future for the printed word?
Absolutely. What form will it take? That’s
anyone’s guess. One thing is for certain.
The medium for delivering it will continue to
change and evolve. 