



The Oxford Handbook of Publishing. Edited by Angus Phillips and Michael Bhaskar.

The Oxford Handbook of Publishing. Edited by Angus Phillips and Michael Bhaskar. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. \$135.00 ISBN 9780198794202.

Scholars working on 21st-century book studies face the ongoing challenge of conducting research on a “moving target”, a term suggested by Rachel Noorda and Stevie Marsden in their recent “State of the Field” article in *Book History* volume 22. Our research objects are changing rapidly, and while monographs we use often such as John B. Thompson’s *Merchants of Culture* (second edition 2012) are excellent introductions, they are slowly becoming outdated.

For this handbook, Angus Philipps, director of the Oxford International Centre for Publishing, well-known to the publishing studies world as the co-author of *Inside Book Publishing* (sixth edition 2019) and editor-in-chief of *LOGOS*, joined forces with London-based industry insider Michael Bhaskar, author of *The Content Machine* (2013) and *Curation: The Power of Selection in a World of Excess* (2016). The 25 chapters, written by an impressive range of experts from mostly anglophone backgrounds, can be used as stand-alone introductions to research areas and questions pertaining to publishing and book studies. Many of the articles will certainly, deservedly, find their way onto publishing and book studies syllabi in the coming years. Before I sketch out the structure and contents of this volume, I would like to note that—given the expansive scope of the handbook and the constraints of this brief review—it would be impossible to cover all of the chapters in detail, for which I offer my apologies.

In their brief introduction, Philipps and Bhaskar consider why publishing is “different” from other industries and also offer their definition of publishing for the purposes of the handbook: “By ‘publishing’ this volume tends loosely to mean ‘book publishing’, echoing the colloquial use and understanding of the term.” (chapter 1, p. 4). Following the introduction, the handbook is structured into three large parts. Part I is titled “Publishing in Context,” part II considers “The Dynamics of Publishing” and part III is titled “Publishing in Practice.” Parts I and II have a certain amount of overlap, as we will see below, while Part III is more distinct. The three large parts are rounded off by a coda on the future of publishing by Bhaskar and Philipps.



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“Publishing in Context” covers the following areas by experts in the respective field: “Publishing History” (Alistair McCleery), “Authorship” (Simone Murray), “Reading” (Adriaan van der Weel), “Copyright and Publishing: Symbiosis in the Digital Environment” (Mira T. Sundara Rajan), “Publishing and Society” (Elizabeth le Roux), “Publishing and Culture: The Alchemy of Ideas” (John Oakes), “Publishing and Information” (Martin Eve), “Networks: From Text to Hypertext, Publishing to Sharing, and Single Author to Collaborative Production” (Carlos A. Scolari), “Publishing and Corporate Social Responsibility” (Angus Phillips). In his chapter, Alistair McCleery considers the history of publishing from Aldus Manutius until today. Read alongside McCleery’s chapter in Leslie Howsam’s *Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book* (2015), the chapter offers interesting insights into the differences and similarities between what is often termed “book history” and “publishing studies.” A highlight of Part I is certainly Mira T. Sundara Rajan’s chapter on copyright and publishing, which I found particularly useful due to its wide and transnational approach.

Part II, “The Dynamics of Publishing” starts with “Economics of Publishing” and “The Strategy of Publishing” (both authored by Albert N. Greco), followed by “Globalization and Publishing” (Miha Kovač and Rüdiger Wischenbart), “Curation in Publishing: Curatorial Paradigms, Filtering, and the Structure of Editorial Choice” (Michael Bhaskar), “Trade Publishing” (John B. Thompson), “Academic Publishing” (Samantha J. Rayner) and “Educational Publishing: Primary and Secondary Education” (Miha Kovač and Mojca K. Šebart). In this part of the volume, I particularly enjoyed Rayner’s insights into where academic publishing stands in the twenty-first century. The setup of the entire second part is a stark (and welcome!) reminder to students and scholars of publishing that while much attention is focused on trade publishing, particularly trade fiction, there are other areas of the market which are highly profitable, very productive – and less risky than trade publishing.

Part III looks at “Publishing in Practice.” This section offers students and industry newcomers succinct introductions to a number of central topics. The chapters are able to offer more depth than the well-established introductory textbooks. Ideally, they will be read alongside an introduction like *Inside Book Publishing* (Angus Phillips and Giles Clark, 2019) and *The Publishing Business: A Guide to Starting Out and Getting On* (Kelvin Smith and Melanie Ramdarshan Bold, 2018). The chapters cover “Organizational Structures in Publishing”



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(Frانيا Hall), “Book Design” (Paul Luna), “Publishing and Technology” (John Maxwell), “Marketing for Publishing” (Alison Baverstock), “Rights” (Lynette Owen), “Libraries” (Alex Holzman and Sarah Lippincott) and “Bookselling” (Niels Peter Thomas). I particularly recommend Frانيا Hall’s overview.

As indicated, Michael Bhaskar and Angus Philipps offer a coda titled “The Future of Publishing: Eight Thought Experiments.” This brief conclusion might be useful as an icebreaker for classroom discussions.

The contributor list of this new handbook reads like a Who’s Who of contemporary (mostly anglophone) publishing studies and 21st-century book studies. However, more diverse voices could have been included, and more chapters could have been co-written across linguistic and national boundaries, to ensure broader perspectives and more representation. I also would have welcomed a chapter on research methods or trends in publishing studies research. Overall, though, the near-impossible effort to summarize the state of publishing in an almost 500-page handbook was successful, and it is certain that this volume will find many readers across disciplines such as literary studies, book studies and media studies over the coming years.

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