

CAN LITERARY PUBLISHING SURVIVE IN IRELAND - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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What's the future of publishing?

- Some say that electronic formats are way of the future and publishing companies are investing accordingly
- However, e-books have failed to live up to the hype: books sell and the market expands - the book is one of the greatest design icons of all time in terms of purpose, function, and design - it's unbeatable and hasn't changed much in the past 500 years.

Key changes in publishing over the last five years in the UK herald changes in the Irish market:

- conglomerate publishing
- effects of new media
- increasing importance of supermarkets in the book market

'Literary publishing' is dead in the UK - calling a book 'literary' is tantamount to calling it 'unsellable'

- everything is commercial
- the creative economy is booming, so it's the job of the agent to exploit authors in a maximum number of formats - from books to films to cuddly toys

International multi-media conglomerates dominate book sales in the US and the UK

- Bertelsmann, News Corp. CBS Corp. Pearson PLC, Holtzbrinck, Hachette
- Independent publishers in the UK have banded together as the Independent Publishers Group.

Two radical changes in the UK book market that have accounted for rise in sales to £100 million

- supermarket sales - account for 10% of UK publishers' turnover - driving UK publishing, including which titles get published
- commercial women's fiction, celebrity autobiographies, 'misery memoirs' all sell well in supermarkets so publishers try to publish accordingly.
- Internet sales - now up to 15% of UK publishers' turnover
- Internet booksellers (particularly Amazon) provide vast selection and convenience

In the Republic, high street booksellers have endured longer than those in the UK, but already the cracks are showing

- Hughes & Hughes blames Tesco and Amazon for 22% drop in Christmas sales.
- Any national book policy in Ireland should take into account the changing

commercial landscape of publishing and book selling and be aware of the pros and cons of supermarket and internet sales.

- The Irish Publishers Association could succeed where UK publishers have failed:

hold firm against the rising tide of deep discounts.

- All Irish publishers, regardless of size, must develop Internet presence.

The relationship between the UK and Ireland in terms of publishing comes down to the relationship between a larger and smaller market

- Many Irish writers prefer to be published in the UK primarily: in order to access a larger market, increase chance of international sales, and be included in UK book awards.

- Irish heritage is considered a key sales point for Irish writers, however.

- Many have been poached from publishers such Poolbeg by UK publishers once they became successful

- Penguin and Hodder have set up Irish offices with the aim of sourcing more Irish literature for an international market.

The survival of good Irish publishing depends on expansion to the international market.

- Brandon Books has set example with new remit as publishers of edgy international fiction and non-fiction.

- Irish publishers might follow the model of Canongate: once a small Edinburgh-based publisher, have built up a reputation for spotting talent which the conglomerates miss and for aggressive and innovative marketing.

- Canongate usually buys world rights which gives them the opportunity to fully exploit all markets. They pay smaller advances but offer good royalties to authors, which makes writers happy and has paid off for the company in terms of profits.

Ireland needs a big commercial book award in the mode of Richard and Judy in the UK.

- Richard and Judy books consistently dominate the UK market

- o Last year, Richard and Judy books represented 21% of UK fiction sales.

- o Richard and Judy winners far outsell Man Booker winners.

- o Winning novels tend to be well-written and challenging reads - but the television format creates a community of readers that encourages people to push on with difficult material.

- o Irish book prizes generally lack this populist approach - the Tubridy Show Listeners' Award comes closest, but doesn't have the impact of a television-related award and isn't limited to Irish authors.

IF IRISH PUBLISHING IS TO SURVIVE THE TO DO LIST IS GROWING:

1. Devise a broadcast media book club award with across the board book trade support for well written Irish fiction and non-fiction to be chosen by viewers.

2. Be aware of and tackle the rising tide of mid to mass market supermarkets sales and the consequent pressures on diversity and quality and reduction in the number of independent book sellers.

3. Embrace new media, devise web sites, reach out to readers by directly selling and marketing titles over the Internet, create reader communities by emailing customers with offers and notices of forthcoming publications.
4. Broaden publishers' outlook, range and scope of titles.
5. Be confident and competent enough to acquire world rights in titles wherever possible and publisher books with international rights sales potential and, indeed, publish US and European titles in translation in the Irish market.