
UNIT 3 VARIOUS KINDS OF PUBLISHING: BOOK AND NEWSPAPER PUBLISHING

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3.0 AIMS

In this unit we shall discuss what is publication, the difference between publishing in India and in the world, and the differences between publishing books and publishing newspapers. We shall be specially looking at publishing in the English language since it is not possible to generalize about publishing in the many Indian languages. The parameters differ widely from one language to the other.

We expect that this brief overview will help you decide on publishing as a career and also to pick which aspect of the trade you would like to focus on.

First of all we will look at some of the well-known definitions of 'book' and of 'newspaper' and see how these affect their publication. We will also briefly look at electronic books and electronic newspapers since they are increasingly coming into vogue.

At the end of the unit you will be able to –

- Define what a book is
- Define what a newspaper is
- Differentiate between the two
- State what publishing is
- Differentiate between publishing a book and publishing a newspaper, and
- Display a working knowledge of the trade of book and newspaper publishing.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The most important difference between a book and a newspaper is that of periodicity or frequency. A book is published in a certain number, usually, 1,100 copies, and distributed to booksellers for sale. The sale may take a week, a month, a year or more. When the edition is sold out, the book may be reprinted as it is, or revised and a second edition then published. If, however, the publisher decides that more copies of the book are not in demand, he may decide to let it go out of print.

Newspapers, on the other hand, have a fixed periodicity. Hundreds, thousands or more copies of an edition may be published everyday, in which case it is called a daily. Next day hundreds, thousands or more copies of the next edition of the daily, carrying the same title but with a different content in news, comment, pictures, etc., are published and sold. Most dailies have special inserts at the weekend, or twice, thrice or more times a week. The *Times of India*, the *Hindustan Times*, the *Indian Express* and in fact most dailies in Delhi and other metropolises have one or more inserts everyday.

Then, there are weeklies, fortnightlies, monthlies and quarterlies which are commonly called magazines but under the Indian law governing publishing are clubbed together as 'newspapers'. They also contain news, views, comments, etc, through words and/or illustrations. Increasingly, all these have an online presence as well, since news must reach as fast as it is being made for today's reader.

The point is that publishing professionals, you for instance, may like to decide on what kind of deadlines you like to follow and specialize accordingly.

3.2 WHAT IS PUBLISHING?

Publishing means putting out, in printed form or online, material which anyone who is interested in the subject covered may like to read and internalize. The process is called publication. Whoever is interested in reading, and/or learning from, published material may have to pay a price to obtain it or access it, but frequently the cost of publishing is partly-and sometimes wholly—met through advertising. That is, the publisher may sell space in his newspaper to anyone who wishes to propagate the advantages or virtues of his goods and/or services. To the extent that advertisements are able to generate revenue, the price that anyone wishing to access the newspaper/book/magazine may get reduced.

The whole idea is mass communication, which is a contrast from selective communication. Under selective communication, the communicator selects the person or group that should receive the message. An example of this is the family, or the classroom, where the message is meant only for members of the family or the class. In mass communication, anyone who wishes to access information on a subject covered by the newspaper, book or magazine should be able to do so at a reasonable price.

The price paid varies widely, from a few rupees to hundreds or thousands. Indeed, in metros like Delhi and Mumbai, many publications mostly devoted to specific localities, are distributed free of cost to the residents of the localities. They give news and information of use to the residents. The cost of production is met through advertisements of businesses in the locality, which too are interested in letting the residents know of their goods and services. An example of this is a magazine which is published once every two months and distributed free to all households in the Asian Games Village Complex of Delhi.

Activity 1

X whispers into Y's ears that a bomb has exploded in the local supermarket. Write in the space provided below whether X has published the information

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(Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.)

Activity 2

X prints a book explaining the methods of cooking various types of foodstuffs and puts it up for sale. Write in the space provided whether X has published the information. (Answer at the end of this unit).

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(Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.)

3.3 BOOK PUBLISHING

India is one of the major book producing countries of the world, accounting for approximately 20,000 titles a year. However, this volume is spread over 15 languages, English being the largest, followed by Hindi and Bengali. A 1954 law named **Delivery of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act** requires publishers to deposit a copy each of all new books or new editions of books published by them with the National Library, Calcutta. Similarly, all newspapers are also required to send one copy of all that they publish to this national institution, which releases statistics on the publication of books and newspapers at intervals.

With the arrival of electronic publishing, book publication will be a combination of paper-based publishing and publishing based on storage of information by electronic devices and techniques. The electronic age has revolutionized the methods of printing, publishing and distribution of books and journals.

“One of the dreams of the digital age has been the e-book, a hand-held portable device that would store multiple volumes in a compact space and drastically cut book prices. In recent months that dream has seemed on the verge of coming true, as glowing newspapers reports have heralded the plans of several companies to introduce e-books.” (Wall Street Journal, Sept 17, 1998).

3.4 NEWSPAPER PUBLISHING

While the print publication of books will not, in the foreseeable future, face any danger from electronic publishing, where newspapers are concerned the advantages of immediacy of news transmission pose a risk to papers that are dailies or even those with evening editions. Even as news is being created, the Internet-based versions are following it almost on a minute-to-minute basis. However, for small town or rural readers and for countries where access to the Internet is limited to the urban, English-knowing population, the print-based newspaper will continue to be the source of news supplemented by radio, TV, etc.

It is, therefore, important that pencil- and paper-based editing be a skill that you, the student should acquire and polish, in addition to word processing skills.

Here is what an experienced old hand at editing a newspaper says:

“Night duty was particularly taxing and exciting – to work when others slept, to know in advance what they would read in the morning, to lie down on the tables at which we had worked and be lulled to sleep by the rhythm of the rotary press.”

Today, in the world of the Internet and handycam cameras (hand-held video cameras capable of recording sound as well), the reader is even more demanding. Even as the towers of the World Trade Center were collapsing on September 11, 2001, readers expected that the reporters and cameraman would be there, without thought of damage to life and limb, providing the latest pictures and news.

3.5 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BOOK AND NEWSPAPER PUBLISHING

The book differs from the newspaper in many other ways apart from periodically and looks. The definition of the book varies from —

*UNESCO’s “non-periodical printed publication not less than 49 pages, exclusive of cover”,

to ***Concise Oxford Dictionary’s** “a portable written or printed treatise, filling a number of sheets, fastened together”,

to ***Webster’s American Dictionary’s** “a set of written, printed or blank sheets bound together in a volume”, to

***The universally accepted definition** “not less than 49 pages, exclusive of covers, written or compiled by one or more authors, and that more than 50 identical copies have been printed and put on sale.”

A newspaper, on the other hand, can be, according to

***Random House Dictionary:** “A publication published on newsprint, usually issued daily or weekly and commonly containing news, comments, features, photographs and advertising”,

or ***Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary:** “A paper published periodically for circulating news”,

or ***Collins Cobuild English Dictionary:** “A publication consisting of large sheets of folded paper on which news, advertisements and other information is printed. Some newspapers are produced everyday from Monday to Saturday, and others once a week.”

Though, these definitions differ widely from each other, certain deductions can be made to identify the differences between book and newspaper production. First, when you pick up two books carrying the same name, their contents will be identical, whereas a newspaper will have different contents on different days though the name will be the same. Second, when a book is published its copies sell for days, weeks and months even if it is a bestseller, but a newspaper sells only for the period for which it is meant. For instance, copies of a daily will not be in demand the next day and copies of a weekly will cease to be in demand as soon as its next issue has arrived. Third, a newspaper starts being treated as waste paper (*raddi* is the Indian name for it) as soon as the period for which it is meant has expired and is then usually sold by weight as junk.

Copies of newspapers are preserved in files only in libraries or in the publishing houses which produce them, whereas books continue to be valid and in demand for

weeks, months and years until and unless the author and publisher decide to produce a revised edition or, if the stock is exhausted before the revised version is ready, to reprint it. If the publisher feels the demand has tapered off and his estimate is that readers would not come forward to buy more copies, he may decide to stop publication of more copies of the book.

But the *fourth* and biggest difference between the two is that while publication is demand-driven in the first case, (that is the decision to publish a newspaper depends upon the demand for it by readers at a particular time and place,) in the second the publication of a book depends upon the publisher's visualization whether it will be liked and therefore bought by readers. This leads to the *fifth* difference between the two trades, which is that it is a reader-driven deadline in the case of a newspaper and a publisher-decided deadline in the case of a book. The publisher of a book has to be satisfied that its content and timing justify the hope that a demand for it will arise from readers at this particular time.

Activity 3

List, in the space provided below, the five differences between newspaper and book publication:

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(Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit)

3.6 WHY THE DIFFERENCE?

From what we have learnt about publishing, it will be appreciated that newspaper and book publishing are different ball games. There are five major reasons:

1. Newspapers are published in response to a felt need of society for news and comment on topical developments. A book is written by an author when he visualizes that readers would like to read and know about a particular subject, process or thing. A publisher will publish it when he agrees that this is something which readers would like to read, and that there will be enough buyers to make it financially viable. In other words, reader preference is indicated *before* a newspaper is published but only *after* a book is published.
2. Newspapers have a deadline to meet. A newspaper must be produced and reach the reader at the time and place he expects it. A book is produced when the author has completed it and when the publisher has decided that the number of readers willing to buy it justifies its production.

3. Newspapers have a fixed periodicity. A daily must be produced at a particular time each day, a weekly at a particular time on a particular day, each week. A book is produced when the author has completed writing it and the publisher has decided it is time to publish it. Here is an example: The book *Advanced Journalism* was published in 1993. It was subsequently reprinted. By 2001 even the reprinted copies had been sold out. The publisher decided there was still demand for it so the author revised and elaborated it further and a revised edition was published in 2001.
4. A newspaper by and large carries forward the story of the world from one issue to the next. A news item about the anti-terrorism was must carry forward the story from what was reported yesterday. The book is a narration of a subject complete in itself, with no necessary antecedents and no necessary follow-up- unless the author and the publisher decide there should be a follow-up.
5. Newspapers are addictive and so readers wait for them. A book may be read and re-read by a reader because he likes it, but books as such are non-addictive.

3.7 PUBLISHING AS A TRADE

Publishing as a trade in India remains underdeveloped, while in Europe and the USA it is a highly developed trade in its own right. In India, particularly in the publication of newspapers, publishing is often confined to giving administrative support to the editor and his team. In Indian newspapers and magazines, it is usually the editor who is the final arbiter of what goes into which issue and what doesn't.

There may still be differences from magazine to magazine. For example, *Outlook* magazine says in its credits page that the printer and publisher is Maheshwar Puri and the Editor-in-chief Vinod Mehta. What goes into a particular issue is decided entirely by the Editor-in-Chief assisted by his team of editors. Also, what direction of development it takes is entirely the business of the Editor-in-chief and his team.

India Today, on the other hand, lists Aroon Purie as Editor-in-Chief and Mohini Bhullar as Publishing Director, which means publisher. However, the credits page is half filled with the credits (who does what), and the other half is filled with "From the Editor-in-Chief". It is a piece signed by Aroon Purie as Editor-in-Chief and lists what is carried in the particular issue and why. No message from the publisher.

Contrast this with any American newspaper. SPAN, the bi-monthly produced by the American Center in India, lists what has been carried in a particular issue, and why, in a full-page piece with the title 'A Letter From The Publisher'. There is a picture byline of the publisher. There is no letter or message from the editor.

When AM Rosenthal returned from a tour of duty in India where he was the *New York Times* correspondent for many years, he clearly had acquired the knowledge and experience to decide what the daily issue should carry and what it need not. So he was designated as Publisher (not Editor).

In India, *The Times of India*, Delhi, lists Balraj Arora as its publisher in Delhi but all the decisions on what a particular issue carries and why are made by Executive Managing Editor Dileep Padgaonkar and Executive Editor Shekhar Bhatia. The *Indian Express*, Delhi, is likewise published by Gururaj Shastri in Delhi but Editor-in-Chief Shekhar Gupta and Executive Editor Raj Kamal Jha decide what goes into the paper and what doesn't while the person responsible for selection of news is

Coomi Kapoor, who is designated Editor. In the *Express*'s many editions, the editor locally in charge-called Resident Editor in other papers-is designated as Editor. He is in charge of the selection of news.

The reason for this difference between the American and Indian practices is historical. Indian publications in English, all except those started by Englishmen were started and published by those who had the financial resources but not the expertise in the language or in news gathering and presentation to decide what is to go into an issue and what not. So the selection of the content was left to the Editor while the person who managed the show was designated as the publisher. In America and Europe, in contrast, the publisher was as adept in the use of the language and in the selection and presentation of the content as the editor, so he had the decisive hand. In short, when a journalist in India distinguishes himself in his trade, he may rise to be the editor. In America, he can hope to rise to be the publisher.

Activity 4

Describe in the space provided below the role of the publisher in American newspaper publishing.

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Who decides in India what goes into an edition of a newspaper?

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(Check your answers with those given at the end of the unit.)

3.8 QUALITIES NEEDED IN A BOOK PUBLISHER

The qualities a book publisher needs depend upon the kind of books he publishes. If they are textbooks for schools, the publisher should have knowledge of the school curricula. If it is scientific books, he should have knowledge of the physical sciences. If it is history and sociology books, the publisher should have knowledge of the subject of the book to find out whether the book will cover ground not covered before, or cover the ground better than earlier authors. If the manuscript he is considering covers ground covered before, he should have the capacity to assess whether the manuscript's presentation of the subject is so markedly superior that students or lovers of the subject will opt for it over the earlier books on the subject.

The key in publishing is marketing. All books produced involve cost, and the cost has to be covered either through sales or through some dedicated individual or organization willing and able to foot the bill. The oft-quoted Sanskrit saying that litterateurs, particularly poets, write 'Swantahasukhaya', or for their own satisfaction, doesn't apply to modern publishing. Valmiki might have composed his *Ramayana* because he was inspired by Lord Rama's story. It certainly wasn't because he

wanted to publish it for mass communication, though it ultimately turned out to be a mass communication item.

But today's writer has to keep in mind what class of people and how many would be eager to read his work. The publisher has also to assess what price they will be willing to pay for the book, for costs have to be covered. Still further, the concept of profit was at best nebulous in earlier times, but today no publisher would want to sink money into a project which does not yield a profit after covering the cost of production. If the money is to be borrowed, the lender has also to be convinced that the income will be enough to cover the interest payable after meeting the cost of production. Even if it is the publisher's own money, he would calculate whether he would be better off lending it at an interest rather than sinking it in publishing a book. Only if he can recover the notional interest would he publish the book. Mass communication comes at a price.

For this reason no publisher publishes every kind of book. This leads to a degree of specialization among publishers. There are publishers who produce only school textbooks, or only scientific or medical books, and they are either equipped themselves to assess the quality of manuscripts and the resultant books or engage people qualified to make such an assessment. Since this is era of super-specialization – for instance nephrology or cardiac medicine or surgery – it is not possible to engage one single man to scan and assess all medical books. Hence such specialists are mostly engaged on a part-time basis or as consultants.

Fiction constitutes by far the largest body of books published. It also has specializations and super-specializations. An added complication is that the assessment and evaluation of fiction is to a great extent subjective. Yet another factor to be kept in view in publishing fiction is that if the visualization of the sales potential turns out to be faulty, the whole investment can become a dead loss unlike, for instance, in scientific or history books where the product may have lasting value even if sales are poor. Consequently, publishers cannot afford to go wrong in assessing the value and saleability of fiction and other literary work. There has, therefore, developed in most advanced societies a corps of people who specialize in making such an assessment. They are called literary agents.

Activity 5

List in the space provided below three qualities needed by a publisher of school textbooks

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(Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit)

3.9 QUALITIES NEEDED IN A NEWSPAPER PUBLISHER

Most publishers try not to interfere openly with the news process, but most editors and reporters are aware of the political and social leanings of owners. Publishers, then, are the owners of the newspapers and do not have too much to do with the everyday tools associated with bringing out a newspaper. Little direct pressure is exerted on managing editors of daily newspapers in making decisions pertaining to

news and in editorial decisions. However, editors do feel and respond to subtle (and non-so subtle) suggestions from these publishers. There is, thus, a degree of management autonomy which extends, in difficult decisions, only to the publisher's door.

We may, thus, roughly equate the managing editor of a newspaper with the publisher of a book. In most newspapers, the managing editor runs the newsroom. It is his or her job to make sure that newspaper is on time and that costs are kept within the budget. He serves as the spokesman for the newspaper. Typically, in smaller setups, he is involved in selecting stories, photos, graphics, laying out pages and editing copy and writing headlines. In large setups, he has a number of subeditors, each responsible for one facet of putting out the paper.

3.10 LITERARY AGENTS

Literary agents, mostly found in Europe and America, are freelancers specializing in different fields. This is so for several reasons. *First*, most publishers think it is better to have the option to discard a literary agent if one or more of his recommendations turn out to faulty. *Second*, most literary agents, having used time and energy to read and evaluate a manuscript, want to make sure it is published. When they work on a freelance basis, they have the option to go to another publisher if one rejects their recommendation. *Third*, it suits the author also, since once a literary agent finds their work worth recommending they are assured of its publication. If one publisher turns it down another will, as a rule, be approached by the literary agent. Literary agents get a percentage of the cover price of a book just as authors get a royalty.

The publishers of fiction and other literary work in Europe and America consequently depend heavily on literary agents to get profitable business. When Arundhati Roy won the Booker Prize for her first novel *The God of Small Things*, literary agents evaluated and strongly recommended her work to publishers. Consequently she got millions of dollars from her publishers. Not only this, its translation into many languages was also recommended by literary agents, and she got even more money.

There is hardly any such example in India. In fact, here no cadre of literary agents has developed. Here publishers of books depend on their own judgment. If a publisher thinks a manuscript has the potential to sell as a book, he publishes it. Occasionally he may take the help of a person who knows the subject, but this is not always so.

The closest anyone in India has come to being a literary agent is Khushwant Singh. When Penguin decided to start publishing in India, it decided that he had a feel of the pulse of the Indian reader of the English language. Khushwant Singh got this reputation based largely on the time he was the Editor of the **Illustrated Weekly of India**. Under his editorship, the Weekly's sales soared into lakhs from the thousands earlier, thanks to his innovations. Consequently Penguin decided he knew the Indian reader's taste better than anyone else.

Here is an interesting example. An admirer of Urdu satirist Saadat Hasan Manto, Khushwant Singh some years ago decided that the person to write in English on Manto's colourful lifestyle was Kishwar Ahluwalia. His decision was based on a series which Kishwar Ahluwalia had written on Manto for radio.

On Khushwant Singh's recommendation, Penguin gave her a contract to write on Manto. Not only this, it gave her an advance to go to Lahore, where Manto lived. By the time she arrived in Lahore, Manto had died in a mental asylum. Undeterred, she met his widow and daughters and churned out a book.

Activity 6

Cite in the space provided below three reasons why literary agents are mostly freelancers.

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(Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit)

3.11 SUMMING UP

In this unit we told you about books and newspapers — what they are, the differences between the two, the trade of publishing, the difference between publishing books and publishing newspapers, the qualities publisher needs and the role of the literary agent in publishing.

Publishing means putting out, in printed form, online or in any other format, information or other learning material which anyone who is interested in the subject can access. Published material can be doled out free of charge, like copies of religious literature, or for a price, which includes the cost of production and may also include a profit. This price is usually reduced by including paid advertising in the publication. This is done to make the publication accessible to as large a number of people as possible.

Newspaper publishing has to catch a deadline. It has to give the latest development in a subject within a time limit. It is consumer-driven, since the reader who is its consumer wants the information at a particular time and place. The publisher has to meet these requirements because the reader's needs are addictive.

Book publishers are not necessarily driven by the felt needs of the consumer. The key to book publishing is the visualization whether readers would be interested in what is given and at what price. Publishers also visualize whether a sufficient number of readers would be interested in buying the publication to make its production profitable. The publisher must have the ability of making reasonably accurate visualizations in order to be successful.

3.12 AIDS TO ANSWERS

Activity 1

No. It is inter-personal communication, not designed to be accessed by whoever is interested.

Activity 2

Yes. Anyone interested in the subject can access it.

Activity 3

1. Newspapers are published in response to a felt need of readers. Books are published when a publisher visualizes that the text will be welcomed by readers.
2. Newspapers have a deadline to catch, books do not.

3. Newspapers have a fixed periodicity, books have no periodicity.
4. Newspapers purvey further developments in world news from the previous issue. Books do not necessarily have antecedents or a follow-up, though some may have an antecedent or a follow-up or both.
5. Newspapers are addictive, books as a rule are not.

Activity 4

1. The publisher in America decides what goes into the particular issue of a newspaper and why.
2. In India it is the editor (in some publications called editor-in-chief), aided by his team, who decides what goes into an issue of his publication and why.

Activity 5

1. Publisher should have knowledge of school curricula.
2. Book should cover ground not covered before, or cover the ground better than earlier books on the subject.
3. Sales of the book should cover the cost of production plus yield a profit.

Activity 6

1. Having spent time and energy reading the manuscript, a literary agent needs the option to approach other publishers if one rejects his recommendation.
2. Publishers want to have the option to discard a literary agent if one or more of his recommendations turns out to be a misjudgment.
3. The author wants to ensure that once a literary agent decides to recommend his book, it is sure to be published, if not by one publisher then by another.

3.13 FURTHER READING

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