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French-Language Publishing in Canada: Main economic impact factors since 2005

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym or abbreviation	**Definition**
B2C	Business-to-consumer
CCA	Canada Council for the Arts
COVID-19	The 2020 Coronavirus disease
MOOC	Massive Open Online Courses
NPO	Non-profit organization
PDF	Portable Document Format
SEO	Search engine optimization
SODEC	Société de développement des entreprises culturelles

Background and mandate

The research mandate was intended to provide an economic picture of Canadian French-language publishers and to explain how they have developed as a result of the various changes in technology, legislation, and the industry in general.

The objective was to better understand the recent economic impacts (2008 to date) of technological, legislative, and market developments in general on the activities of Canadian French-language publishers.

To achieve this, the mandate involved conducting 5 to 10 one-on-one interviews with Canadian French-language publishers (Quebec publishers and publishers outside Quebec, including at least one publisher specializing in the educational field) to document their lived realities in terms of recent economic impacts (2008 to date) of technological, legislative, and market developments in general on their activities.

More specifically, the mandate was to document the following:

- What are the technological, legislative, and general changes in the book market that have caused the most significant impacts in recent years?
- To what extent is the viability of Canadian French-language publishers threatened?
- How did the digital environment affect publishers and authors? What skills are lacking, and how can they be addressed?
- Has the context of COVID-19 changed the way publishers work? If so, how?
- What information is not available to adequately answer the previous questions? How can this be remedied?

Introduction

In Canada, French-language publishers constitute a highly diverse ecosystem, particularly in terms of published genres and the size and age of businesses. While this diversity underlies unique realities, particularly in terms of the markets targeted and available resources, the fact remains that Canadian French-language publishers operate in a relatively similar global environment. As part of this study, we considered this global environment and surveyed Canada's French-language publishers to identify their changes that have had an economic impact on the activities of these businesses.

Since 2005, society has undergone many changes, whether in the political, economic, social, cultural, technological, ecological, or legislative environment. Some of these changes have had impacts on the activities of Canadian French-language publishers. Publishers interviewed for this study discussed the many changes in the book market ecosystem, including some shifts toward concentration, changes in sales networks, and a context of [translation] "overproduction."[i]

In addition to these industrial changes, major technological changes have come along that have impacted each one of the publisher's functions, whether it be editorial, production, manufacturing, or communication and management. While many of these technological developments have been beneficial to publishers, particularly in terms of productivity gains, others have proven harmful. The various formats of digital books that have emerged over the period studied have not generated the expected sales or profits, in particular due to the low economic value of digital files in the eyes of readers.

Other changes have also affected the activities of Canadian French-language publishers since 2005, including legislative changes (the exceptions introduced to the Copyright Act in 2012), and the COVID-19 pandemic that has raged since March 2020 has resulted in relatively significant changes, some of which could continue over time, particularly the shift in procurement methods.

Thus, the results of the survey of Canadian French-language publishers are presented in this report under the following broad themes: book market developments, technological developments, legislative changes, and the impacts of COVID-19. In addition to these major themes, there are sections that deal specifically with the development of publishers' skills and their financial viability.

Methodological approach

Our methodological approach was part of an inductive general approach and involved the general methodology of Grounded Theory[ii] (MTE). Thus, our approach consisted of developing the economic picture based on the statements of the participants. This is not a question of making statistical generalizations but of improving our understanding of the changes that were actually experienced by the study participants. Similarly, it is not a question of statistical sampling but of theoretical sampling, for which we made every effort to diversify participants in order to collect data from several different contexts.

The data was collected by conducting one-on-one interviews with a theoretical sample of nine French-language publishers in Canada. Each interview was recorded for practical purposes only, that is, to facilitate the partial transcription of participants' statements for analysis. The interview audio files will remain strictly confidential and will not be shared in any way. The transcripts were analyzed by coding at three levels (meaning unit, category, and theme), all in accordance with the principles of MTE. In addition, we note that the analyses began as soon as the first interview was conducted, and the first results of the analysis made it possible to address elements of statements or avenues for analysis in the following interviews, and so on. In addition, we did not use interview guides but a list of topics to be addressed. Our approach was to let interviewees talk as they pleased about their realities and, at the end of the interview, in the event that the participant had not raised certain topics, we would redirect their attention to them. This way of doing things allows for the emergence of realities that an interview guide would have eliminated.

Some statistical data were also requested from participating publishers, including data on their production (number of titles published) and on the number of full-time employees for fiscal years 2018, 2019, and 2020. This data was sometimes transmitted orally, sometimes in writing. In any case, data from the nine publishers was collected, aggregated, and standardized for analysis. All other statistical data presented in this report comes from the Department of Canadian Heritage's Canada Book Fund.

Theoretical sampling

Together with the department's teams, we agreed on a theoretical sampling that varies the contexts based on business size, main literary genre, and the business's geographic location (in Quebec or outside Quebec). The final theoretical sample is as follows (all names of businesses and interviewees were removed to maintain the confidentiality of the participants):

1. Category: Literary publishers
    a. 1 x small publisher in Quebec
    b. 1 x large publisher in Quebec
    c. 1 x publisher outside Quebec
2. Category: General publishers (non-fiction/how-to guides)
    a. 1 x small publisher in Quebec
    b. 1 x large publisher in Quebec
3. Category: Children's book publishers
    a. 1 x large publisher in Quebec
    b. 1 x publisher outside Quebec
4. Category: Educational publishers
    a. 1 x publisher of any size in Quebec
5. Category: University presses
    a. 1 x publisher of any size in Quebec

In the remainder of the study, data on category 4 and 5 publishers will be presented in aggregate form to maintain the confidentiality of the participants.

Results

The findings of this study are presented under broad topics, including changes in the book market, technological developments, legislative changes, and the impacts of COVID-19. In the first section, we analyze the statistics of the publishers in the theoretical sample (number of titles published and number of full-time employees). Given the statistical non-representativeness of the sample, we recommend that it be read with caution. We also provide an analysis of statistical data provided by the department (government assistance received, total revenues, and profit margin), which are statistically representative.

Part 1: Statistical analysis

Table 1 – Production (in number of published titles) of Canadian French-language publishers in the sample (n=9), 2018, 2019, and 2020

Publisher type/Year	2018	2019	2020
Small general publisher in Quebec	14	14	7
Large general publisher in Quebec	293	274	243
Small literary publisher in Quebec	13	17	11
Large literary publisher in Quebec	85	66	80
Literary publisher outside Quebec	15	16	20
Children's book publisher outside Quebec	12	13	14
Children's book publisher in Quebec	44	34	32
University press and educational publisher	52	113	139
Total	528	547	546
Average	58.67	60.78	60.67
Median	20	31	28

While there is a relatively significant change in the number of titles published by the sample of Canadian French-language publishers for the period studied, that is, a median of 28 titles published per year in 2020 compared with a median of 20 titles published in 2018, it appears that this growth has not been seen for all types of publishers. In fact, there was a significant decrease in the output of the general publishers of the theoretical sample, from 307 titles in 2018 to 250 titles published in 2020, or a decrease of 18.5%. On the other hand, there is a significant increase in the output of publishers in the educational sector (university press and educational publisher), which increased from an output of 52 titles in 2018 to an output of 139 titles in 2020, an increase of 167%.

Tableau 2 – Nombre d'employés à temps plein des éditeurs francophones canadiens, de l'échantillon (n=9), selon le type d'éditeur, 2018, 2019 et 2020

Publisher type/Year	2018	2019	2020
Small general publisher in Quebec	3	3	3
Large general publisher in Quebec	68	68	64
Small literary publisher in Quebec	2	2	2
Large literary publisher in Quebec	47	38	40
Literary publisher outside Quebec	3.25	4.25	4.25

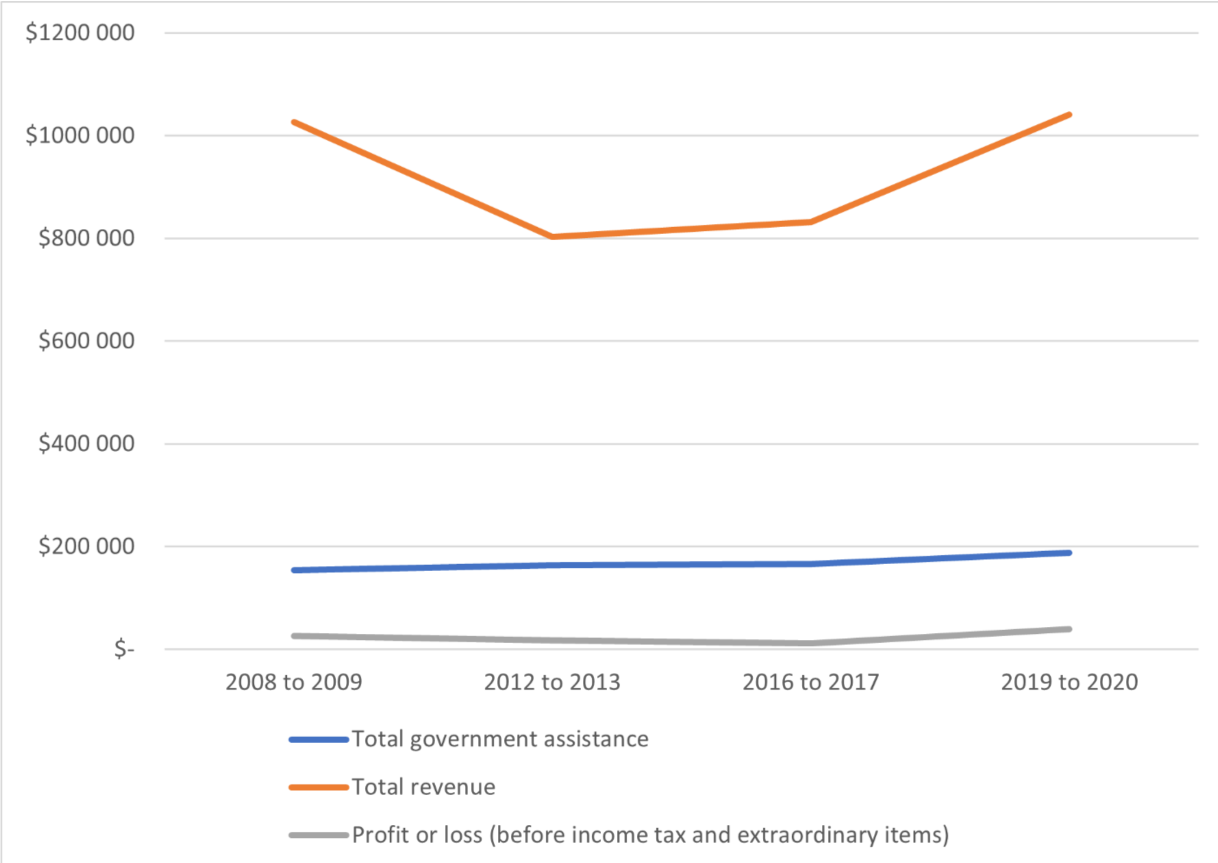
Publisher type/Year	2018	2019	2020
Children's book publisher outside Quebec	3	3	3
Children's book publisher in Quebec	9	9	9
University press and educational publisher	163	177	174
Total	298.25	304.25	299.25
Average	33.14	33.81	33.25
Median	6	6	6

The results of our analyses of changes in the number of full-time employees in the sample of French-language publishers lead us to conclude that, for the period from 2018 to 2020, we have not noted any significant changes. The median remained the same, and the average only changed positively by less than 1% over the period. However, it should be noted that while smaller publishers have experienced very little change in this area, larger publishers have experienced more noteworthy changes. Indeed, the university press and educational publisher in the sample saw their teams increase overall from 163 full-time employees to 174 while the large general publisher experienced a decrease in full-time employees from 68 to 64 individuals.

Table 3 – Table of changes in government assistance, total revenues, and profit margin for Canadian French-language publishers, 2008 to 2020, based on Canada Book Fund data

Year	# of publishers	Total government assistance	Total revenues	Profit or Loss (before income tax and extraordinary items)	Profit margin percentage
2008 to 2009 (Total)	106	$28,952,441	$320,537,053	$21,474,709	6.7 %
2008 to 2009 (Median)	-	$154,367	$1,026,263	$25,577	-
2012 to 2013 (Total)	118	$32,099,521	$331,721,812	$17,637,832	5.3 %
2012 to 2013 (Median)	-	$164,261	$802,559	$17,156	-
2016 to 2017 (Total)	124	$32,041,391	$325,937,975	$13,604,062	4.2 %
2016 to 2017 (Median)	-	$166,066	$831,737	$12,056	-
2019 to 2020 (Total)	122	$32,773,790	$322,494,695	$18,132,438	5.6 %
2019 to 2020 (Median)	-	$188,499	$1,041,333	$39,604	-

Figure 1 – Chart of the development of government assistance, total revenues, and profit margin for Canadian French-language publishers, 2008 to 2020, based on Canada Book Fund data



Data on the changes in total revenues, profit margin, and government assistance received by Canadian French-language publishers were analyzed using the medians, all in order to eliminate the bias in the number of publishers for each study period (2008 to 2009; 2012 to 2013; 2016 to 2017; 2019 to 2020).

During this period (2008 to 2020), Canadian French-language publishers saw their total revenues increase by 1.4%, while government assistance increased by 22.1%. This observation can be interpreted in many ways and would require a thorough analysis of the raw data in order to be able to draw any conclusions.

It should also be noted that for the same period, publishers' pre-tax profits increased by 54.8%. However, it should be noted here that this dramatic increase appears to be less significant in light of the figures: The median pre-tax profits of publishers increased from $25,577 between 2008 and 2009 to $39,604 between 2019 and 2020.

Part 2: Changes in the book market

The book industry has undergone many changes over the past 15 years. The study participants reported a great deal of change, but in very different ways depending on the type of publisher. While some changes in the book market have impacted the activities of all publishers, others impacted only some of the types of publishers. That is why as we discuss the major topics, we will clarify the similarities and differences in impacts on the different publishers.

The book industry as an integral part of a business line

The book industry operates in collaboration with other industries, and the changes in these industries directly affect the players in the book industry. The recent crisis in the paper industry, and therefore in the printing industry, has had a significant indirect impact on not only the book supply chain but also on literary diversity.

> This is recent, but the closure of some paper mills and printers has resulted in a significant reduction in supply. This has created challenges in managing production schedules, challenges in inventory management, and challenges in terms of the viability of titles. This situation will drive up the price of books.

> Recently, the increase in the price of paper combined with the decrease in available press time has caused problems in terms of cost and inventory management.

> Currently, we can no longer print short runs because printers do not have press time and paper is scarce. This means that we order high-print runs, which causes inventory problems, stockouts, publication delays, and viability problems. In addition, it means that we publish fewer first-time authors.

Although, as technology evolved (discussed below), publishers could increase their efficiency and continue to grow without significantly increasing book prices over the decades, it seems that the rising prices of raw materials could force publishers to increase the public price of books.

Competition to watch

Over the past 15 to 20 years, the industry has seen the emergence of large retail chains, a trend that is not unique to Quebec, but is common in Western countries. In French-speaking Canada, in the context of a narrow market that required state intervention in 1981 with the adoption of the Act Respecting the Development of Québec Firms in the Book Industry (Book Act), which allowed for the creation of an institutional market that would make book retailing viable in all regions of Quebec, the trend toward the concentration of booksellers remains a concern. During the period studied, the two largest bookstore chains in Quebec merged (Renaud-Bray acquired Archambault bookstores), and, in addition, the new Canadian French-language book giant also acquired the book marketer/distributor[iii] Prologue in 2017, and this was of great concern to publishers.

> The quasi-monopoly of Renaud-Bray/Archambault, which is now merged with book the distributor (and "diffuseur") Prologue, leads to power games: This destabilizes the book ecosystem.

> There has been an increase in the number of independent bookstores and the strengthening of the Renaud-Bray chain, particularly through the purchase of the Archambault chain. This did not affect us, but we noted business practices that we consider problematic….

> We are concerned that one book distributor is owned by the largest bookstore chain in Quebec. This is a shift that could be dangerous to the book ecosystem.

Time: A rare commodity for consumers

The many developments in the digital environment have led to the emergence of more easily accessible and low-cost cultural products and services, which have been added to the pre-existing offerings: Thousands of films or series can now be watched on Netflix, ICI TOU.TV, Apple TV+ or other similar platforms for a fraction of the price of watching them in theatres; you can also listen to thousands of songs on Spotify or Google Play, also for a fraction of the price of an album; you can also watch many concerts on YouTube, which is free of charge. There is no shortage of examples. However, this new and extensive offer of low-cost cultural products and services constitutes competition in the market for the attention of cultural consumers. Time has become a rare commodity.

> The cultural offerings available are extensive, and it is increasingly difficult to grab the consumer's attention: We are competing with other cultural sectors.

> Readers no longer have time to read 200-page books on a given subject. Their agendas are filled to full capacity, and they choose to search for this information elsewhere, especially on the Internet.

> Over the last 15 years, our print runs have decreased. This is partly due to greater competition from other types of entertainment. There has been a slight increase recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, when these other forms of entertainment were unavailable, and this seems to confirm our intuition in this regard.

Changing sales networks

There are generally three book sales networks in the market, namely, the independent bookstores network (bookstores that are not part of a chain or banner), chain booksellers (bookstores that are part of the same chain), and [translation] "mass-market" channels, which include all retailers that sell books but are not booksellers (Costco, Walmart, pharmacies, grocery stores, specialty shops such as pet stores, etc.).

Over the period studied, despite some more difficult periods, there has been some development of the independent bookstores network and a consolidation of chain booksellers (see above). Survey participants are also seeing an increase in their book sales in these networks, to the detriment of the mass-market channel.

> There has been an increase in visits to (and book sales in) bookstores and this has been accompanied by a decrease in book sales through the mass-market channel.

> The increase in the number of independent bookstores has led to an increase in our sales.

> We are currently seeing an increase in bookstores: We have no information to measure the impact of this increase, but this creates more sales opportunities.

> For us, Amazon has not progressed that much. However, the mass-market channel has seen a decline in sales while the bookstore channel has increased. The fact that the mass-market sales channel is declining means that we make different editorial choices.

These macroeconomic developments are accompanied by microeconomic developments, which have a significant impact on certain types of publishers. Independent bookstores, which are by nature small and most often brick-and-mortar stores serving a small local area, seem to have initiated a major change: Independent bookstores are increasingly active in the book trade; they are getting back into the business of recommending books, and this has an impact on publishers, especially literary publishers.

> In literary publishing, independent bookstores are important. Their evolution has an impact on our sales: They bring books to life through events; some booksellers are becoming real online influencers. We are seeing people return to the bookseller's recommendation.

> Booksellers are less anonymous than before: They have become veritable brokers, they are active, and they play an important role in a context of overproduction.

This move by independent booksellers towards recommendations and brokering is taking place in a context where chain bookstores are taking a completely different approach: that of product diversification, and this strategy is having a significant impact on publishers, particularly in terms of marketing strategy.

> The transformation of bookstore chains to retailers who are skilled in marketing all sorts of goods: This makes it more difficult for books to take their place.

On top of these developments in book-sales networks are other issues specific to certain publishers. In fact, among publishers outside Quebec, there is dissatisfaction with the growing number of small towns and localities without bookstores, while among general publishers, we are seeing the imposition of new charges by the large retail chains of the mass-market channel.

> The number of retail outlets is decreasing in small towns, especially in minority communities.

> The Walmart chain now demands a 2% discount systematically to expand its chain. It is the publisher that assumes this discount.

Movements among distributors combined with "overproduction"

During the period studied, the consolidation of French-language book "marketer/distributors. It is important here to distinguish between the distributor's marketing activities from its distribution activities: Marketing consists of making the represented publisher's book known to the various retailers, establishing the most appropriate quantity to market and negotiating the maximum visibility for the book with retailers. Distribution consists of storing inventories, processing orders received, shipping them to retailers, invoicing, and processing any returns from retailers. This consolidation has reduced the number of available distributors. All the while, publishers who were interviewed noted an increase in the number of titles being published in the market. In the end, these two combined trends have created a critical situation for publishers. It is no longer possible for a book to be marketed properly because the distributors' sales teams now have too many titles to present to booksellers at each visit, and this has led to a reaction on the part of the publishers: over-marketing, i.e. public relations activities developed by publishers and directed at booksellers, in order to raise awareness of their products.

> The ways in which our distributor is marketing, are new. The shift is recent, and we cannot measure the impact it has had. That said, we believe that the distributors are not doing their jobs of marketing books, and this makes the task of introducing a new author even more difficult. "Overproduction" contributes to these difficulties.

> There was a consolidation 20 years ago among distributors and marketing/sales teams: a decrease in available options. Today, the sales teams do the basic work, but there is no real support: not much time for each book/each publisher.

Overproduction

The topic of overproduction was widely discussed by participants. We were unable to document and validate these statements due to lack of time and resources. Nevertheless, there is a convergence in the participants' statements to this effect: They report that they observe overproduction, i.e., a large number of French-language titles (from here and elsewhere) that are marketed in Quebec. This overproduction, combined with the problem of inadequate marketing by certain distributor's sales teams (see above), has a significant impact on publishers of all types of publications, particularly because they create the need to set up promotional and communications activities that will "replace" the distributor's marketing work with booksellers.

> Overproduction has led to over-marketing in the face of problematic marketing. It is the public relations team [of our publishing firm] that deals with over-marketing.

> Overproduction forces us to be proactive. The disappearance of avid readers combined with the decrease in media coverage and the fact that distributors are now merely stewards forces us to over-market. This over-marketing activity is combined with the fact that we have been forced to organize events in bookstores to stand out and attract customers. Moreover, it is independent bookstores that developed this form of mediation.

Faced with the trend of overproduction and what it brings, other publishers raise the need to specialize, that is, to focus production on a specific genre.

> We have noted a tendency, even a need, to specialize to attract customers: It is more difficult for large general publishers to maintain their market share in the face of small specialized/niche publishers.

Overproduction also leads to other impacts within the industry. Since physical space is limited in all retail outlets, especially independent bookstores, this has resulted in fewer orders being placed by retailers (fewer copies per title are ordered by retailers at the time of its first marketing), and thus shorter print runs for publishers. The commercial lifespan of the book (the length of time the book remains visible and available at retailers) is also reduced. Similarly, fewer copies per title ordered by the retailer results in lower visibility of the title at the retailer and at the same time a lower chance of being noticed and bought by consumers.

> A book's lifespan in stores is limited. This is a less recent trend, but it is increasing over time. As a result, print runs have decreased. This trend forces us to better manage inventories and to use better printing technologies that enable short print runs and faster restocking.

> Space seems smaller in bookstores: It is difficult to create visibility for our titles.

Poor media coverage

While study participants feel that bookstore space is increasingly difficult to obtain, they also point to a decrease in the media space dedicated to reading and books. In addition to its direct impact on the visibility of works in the public space, the limited space reserved for reading and books in the traditional media contributes to the marginalization of the practice of reading. The less reading is visible in the public space, the more marginal it becomes in society.

An industry that reflects social trends

Books remain social and cultural media. By this very fact, they often reflect society. That is why movements such as #MeToo and diversity and inclusion were addressed by the book industry.

> Social movements have an effect on publisher output. We have seen the emergence of new Indigenous publishing houses. This leads to a diversity of output, an increase in supply and, at the same time, more sales. It also enables the enhancement of collections that address these issues.

> This led to discussions and reflections: We have a collective responsibility in that regard.

> Equity and diversity movements in society guide the organization's publication and recruitment decisions. That's good, we're trying harder.

Trends specific to educational and academic publishing

Some developments in the industry in general concern only educational publishers and university presses. We outline them here.

The anglicization of research: a threat to editorial diversity

Scientific and university publishing in English is more popular among French-speaking researchers (to the detriment of French-language publication). This is due in part to the fact that English-language scientific literature reaches more readers and is de facto used more. The anglicization of research results in a loss of research diversity and is a viability problem for French-language university presses.

The English-language educational market is stagnating

In the Canadian English-language market for primary and secondary school textbooks, there has been a complete lack of continuous and regular curriculum revisions over the past 10 years. There is a mismatch between the curricula in English-language Canadian schools and reality: The contents are outdated. This situation creates development challenges for publishers, so the market is shrinking. In Quebec, and thus in French-language primary- and secondary-school textbook publishing, curricula have been revised more regularly. The lack of curriculum reform also leads to a viability problem.

The resale trend

The model of reselling books in paper format has always existed for all types of books, including textbooks. Thus, the trend of reselling textbooks in schools, CEGEPs, and universities is not new. However, in recent years, study participants have noted that the resale market has become highly organized: Social media, student associations, and students' cooperatives (COOPSCO Network) are all actors who were involved in facilitating the procurement to used books, particularly in the context of colleges and universities. This state of affairs has created a negative dynamic for publishers and authors, who do not receive any royalties on these sales.

Other issues addressed by publishers

The publishers interviewed also raised issues that are unique or specific to their contexts. We present them below in a brief overview.

Reading is considered to be an active cultural and social practice, as opposed to a passive practice such as listening to music. Reading requires knowledge and mastery of the language code not only to decipher texts but also to understand them. The Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALL) Survey measures this reading skill. For decades, the results have not changed significantly: About half of the Francophone population has difficulty understanding a complex text. Although a causal link cannot be established between an individual's literacy level and the purchase of books, it goes without saying that there is a link between literacy levels and reading habits.

> Literacy remains an issue. The long-term impact on the survival and growth of publishing.

In educational publishing, a new book-rental trend has emerged at colleges and universities (especially on the English-language side; it is not very well organized on the French-language side). The trend has become significant, especially outside Quebec. Lexya in Quebec City and uOttawa come to mind. The model allows a student to rent a book for one semester for a fraction of the price of purchasing the original textbook. However, no royalties are paid to the author or publisher on these rental revenues. Another pattern has been observed at the college/university level: not buying the assigned books. Students do not buy the books and instead photocopy them from the library.

Part 3: Technological changes

Technological developments were not only numerous during the period under study, but also rapid. The participants discussed them systematically, but often in different ways. We noted that publishers have been impacted differently depending on the business's publication genre.

The digital environment as a competitor

The world of the Internet is rich in editorials of all kinds (blogs, social media, etc.), as well as informative content covering everything from astronomy to health and gastronomy. In fact, over time, Internet users have developed a habit of looking things up online, to the detriment of obtaining this information through reading a book on the subject. This has had economic impacts on publishers of how-to and reference guides.

> For publishers of how-to guides, the Internet has taken over the role of expert, to the detriment of book authors. Before the Internet, authors had no real competition in this respect.

> Revenue from reference titles has experienced a sharp decline in sales, especially internationally, and this has been caused in particular by the free online access to this type of reference information (reference information offered online for free).

> The free information available on the web causes a decrease in sales of certain types of books (documentaries) and a decrease in print runs.

The educational publisher from the sample reported being impacted by a similar trend. There are more and more free online training courses, especially those developed by universities. These Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) combine the content developed by professors and are made available free of charge on university platforms, i.e., digital learning environments (DLEs).

> MOOCs are seen as competitors for college and university textbooks.

> Finally, we have noted the development of educational content by teachers in "digital learning environments" (DLEs). This content competes with educational publishing.

The digital environment: an additional cost for publishers

The presence of the publishing company, its works and its authors in the digital environment has become necessary, even essential, but publishers are unable to measure the impact of this presence on their sales. New online book purchasing and search behaviours have led to the need to be discoverable in the digital environment. These activities mobilized the publishers' teams and led to numerous investments. Today, publishers perceive these investments as additional costs and are unable to see any benefits in them.

> We need to be present in this environment, and that incurs costs and requires that our teams spend time on it. However, we have the intuition that this is not very profitable for us: We cannot quantify the impact of being there or not. What percentage of our income is generated by these activities, this presence in the digital environment?

> The digital shift has led us to make versions of the same work in several formats, which required an adaptation of production workflows, marketing channels, and contracts. For

> instance, for audio format, we have even become a producer at the Union des artistes (UDA). This digital shift has profoundly changed the publishing profession.

> It is the proliferation of requests concerning digital: This takes a lot of energy, time, and resources although the commercial impact is minimal. We still have to be there. The same has been noted regarding social media: a lot of energy, effort, time, but what impact does it have? A more recent example is the accessible book: It is important, it is complex, it requires a lot of resources, it is not profitable: There is no viable financial structure. It is the same for audiobooks: They are culturally important, but they are not viable.

Metadata is derived from an industry sales structure. Metadata and its structures are also continuously changing, and we need to constantly learn about them. Despite all our efforts, we cannot measure the impact on the readership and/or on the discoverability of our works.

The increase in digital formats has not generated new revenues

Over the past 15 years, the industry has seen the emergence of many new digital book formats. From the first version of the digital book in PDF to the current format ePub 3.0, publishers have experienced other versions of the ePub format as well as many proprietary formats, notably that of Amazon. Each time, publishers have had to adapt, both in terms of production and diffusion. However, these new digital formats, whether they be text formats such as ePub 3.0 or digital audio formats, have been added to the production workflows of publishers, with all that this entails in terms of adaptation, training, costs, and investments. However, it appears that this increase in formats did not produce the much-anticipated revenues.

> The production of new digital formats has been added to the core market: We are forced, in a way, to equip ourselves to respond to new behaviours, but these new formats have not had a significant impact on our activities.

> We have noted a certain obsession with new digital book formats: The digital book itself, the accessible book, and now the audiobook. However, at our company, only 10% of the titles published in these formats are profitable (90% are published at a loss).

> Audiobooks are not profitable, despite grants, but we are still in a test phase.

Additional opportunities for publishers

The most observable trend in the digital environment it is that of bringing people together. In addition to the image of two individuals from two continents talking via a video chat application, the Internet has resolutely brought individuals and businesses together and facilitated contacts of all kinds. Study participants brought up this state of affairs when talking about the possibility of selling online directly to consumers. The possibility is real, but many do so only a little bit or not at all, in particular to protect their relationship with booksellers, from which most of their revenue is derived. In fact, currently, e-commerce is not common among publishers, but it could become so.

> We have observed that technological innovations in the field of reading come from the Pure Players:[iv] they are taking market shares away from booksellers and this could have future implications, possibly the development of direct sales to consumers by publishers (B2C).

> The digital environment brought us closer to the consumer, which enabled the development of direct sales online, while respecting the book chain. We have invested in and developed infrastructure for e-commerce.

Technological advances in production and printing: tools for better inventory and workflow management

There have been many technological advances in book manufacturing over the last 15 years. These advances have enabled printers to offer relatively low printing and binding prices, low enough to enable publishers to keep the public price of books well below that of the consumer price index. These technological advancements, combined with advances in the handling and processing of orders by distributors and their sales teams, have also led to the introduction of short print runs (reduced risk and inventory burden).

> Digital presses have led to the emergence of short-run printing, improving inventory management and thus improving profitability.

> The digitization of book publishing and production processes enabled us to become more efficient in this area.

> The printing technologies that enabled short-run printing made it easier for us to meet ad hoc requests and contributed to better inventory management.

> Short-run printing enabled better inventory management.

Book piracy in the digital environment

We note that students share books online (piracy), and we are facing problems with foreign jurisdiction in this matter (sites hosted abroad).

The low value of digital books

Digital books, whether in PDF, ePub, or digital audio format, are not valued enough by the consumer. For study participants, this low value seems to be underpinned by the possibility of accessing other cultural products (series, movies, music) at low prices on platforms such as Netflix, Spotify, and others. It is also noted that the digital book has not been adapted for consumers. One only need think of the model of borrowing digital books in public libraries, which seems absurd to users: A digital book cannot be borrowed if it is borrowed by another user. While this situation makes sense for a printed book (the book cannot be in two places at once), it becomes absurd, in the reader's eyes, for a digital book. In the absence of a viable business model for publishers and appropriate for readers, the digital book is now seen more as a necessary companion to the paper book.

> It has been noted that online purchasing has become more democratic, and this is leading to profound changes in book promotion. There is also a low valuation of books in digital format: This may be due to the fact that other cultural products are available at low cost (Netflix, Spotify).

> We need more marketing tools to develop a viable business model for digital formats, and these new tools require more knowledge.

> In the primary and secondary school sector, the digital book has little value: There is a discrepancy between the value perceived by the user and the actual value of the digital product. In addition, digital books are not currently profitable when published [translation] "alone," i.e., without its companion in paper format, and one does not want to buy the book in paper format if it is not accompanied by a digital version. It can be said that the value of books in digital format is zero: Content is not valued enough.

Publishing is constantly adapting to the ever-changing digital environment

The constant flow of innovations in the digital environment means that publishers must adapt continuously: adapting processes, training staff, reprocessing catalogue titles (sometimes thousands of titles) to make them available in the most current format. These adaptations require not only time and strong resilience, but also significant investments.

> The emergence and development of the digital environment has led to the management of significant changes in the organization; moreover, this digital transformation is continuous, and this involves recurring investments for the organization. Sometimes, we are overwhelmed by the management of these changes.

> We are in a continuum of technological advances, and this requires continuous adaptation. Take for example on-demand printing: New technology in response to low print runs and the exploration of new markets (we use Ingram in the USA). This continuous adaptation requires not only ongoing training, but also the reprocessing of files in [translation] "up-to-date" formats.

> At the time of the emergence of the digital book, we wanted to produce them in-house, and this required the acquisition of knowledge and skills to produce them.

> Metadata is derived from an industry sales structure. Metadata and its structures are also continuously changing, and we need to constantly learn about them.

> The technological environment has led us to adapt to new technological contexts. In production: shift to digital formats; in communication and marketing: change in strategies

> and activities in the digital environment; transactional site for the business and thus new B2C activity (we have also seen an increase in our direct sales via the transactional site).

Outsourcing of digital activities: A threat

Small publishers lack the organizational structures and resources to follow the relentless flow of technological innovations and the learning that they involve. Faced with this state of affairs, these publishers have no choice but to outsource these activities. However, in so doing, these businesses do not develop the expertise necessary for their development in the digital environment, and this could pose a threat to their long-term survival.

> Technological advances take place quickly and are unrelenting. This makes it impossible to learn everything and do everything. We have to outsource to companies or freelancers who have developed expertise.

The shift of promotional activities to the digital environment

Consumer habits have kept pace with what is offered in the online environment. The online purchase of books in both paper and digital formats has become more democratic, and this requires publishers to develop communication and business strategies specifically designed to increase their online visibility. These promotional activities are in addition to those that are still needed to position the book in paper format at retailers and in the traditional media.

> The way books are promoted is now very different. It is imperative that the author be on social media: The algorithms of Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are important and have compelled us to shift some budgets to these new media.

> The challenges of book discoverability in the digital environment have required communications teams to adapt and develop new strategies.

More accessible foreign markets

New book manufacturing technologies, particularly print-on-demand, have enabled some publishers to develop and/or test some foreign markets. Indeed, these technologies make it possible to make a catalogue of works available to a market without dedicating a physical inventory to it: Books are available to consumers online and when one is ordered it is printed, bound, and shipped directly to the consumer. A webinar organized by Livres Canada Books was recently broadcast.

> Print-on-demand enabled us to develop markets that were previously difficult to access abroad. This required the development of metadata skills and strategies to improve the discoverability of our titles.

Trends specific to educational and academic publishing

From editorial organization to content organization

In the primary and secondary school sector, digital technology has created several new positions: in digital infrastructure, in the development of digital content, as well as positions in digital content editing.

> We had to develop all the structures of the organization as if we were a software development company.

Digital shift of educational publishing

While books in digital format do not appear to have taken off in a viable way in the market in general, it is noted that primary and secondary school publishing has taken a decisive digital turn. It also seems that this significant shift was driven by a massive investment in equipment to enable the use of digital content in the classroom, investments from governments.

> For primary and secondary schools, it is really digital technology that has impacted us the most. It was a relatively slow progression: at the beginning, early adopters came primarily from science education. In 2010, the Quebec Government launched a program to equip classrooms with digital whiteboards and computers; this was a catalyst and enabled digital technology to enter the classroom. However, this democratization took place slowly. One factor that has accelerated the democratization of digital technology in classrooms is certainly the use of iPads in private schools. In public schools, the transition to digital technology occurred more recently, about five years ago.

It is also important to mention that this digital shift in school publishing has involved the production of different content: Publishers went from producing static content (books in paper format) to producing dynamic content in digital format. Although this type of production requires more significant investments than traditional production (static, for paper format), it is more suited to the digital environment and more suited to the needs of readers/students/teachers.

> It should also be noted that the investments needed to produce a digital textbook are greater than those needed to develop a paper textbook.

College and university publishing has not made the digital shift

According to the study participants, technology has had less impact on college and university publishing than it has had on primary and secondary school publishing. Digital technology is used less than in primary and secondary schools. The government makes fewer investments in college and university textbooks in digital format; for example, iPads are not provided to college and university students. Participants also raised the fact that some college and university professors are more reluctant to deal with digital technology, which is slowing down the adoption of digital technology by colleges and universities.

Open access: A greater threat than its economic benefit

The shift towards open access for university presses is a major challenge. While the titles made available under this model are highly successful, they do not contribute to the profitability of businesses and threaten their long-term viability.

> We currently have 103 titles available in open access, and these titles have been downloaded 270,000 times since they were made available online. This is a viability problem for university presses.

Part 4: Legislative and governmental developments

Some grant programs were mentioned by the participants in the study under the topic of legislative developments. For this reason, we are presenting them here alongside the actual legislative developments.

The Copyright Act: Uneven impacts by genre published

Amendments made to the Copyright Act in 2012 had impacts of varying magnitude depending on the genre published by publishers. On a continuum of magnitude, literary publishers have been the least impacted, general publishers (how-to, reference, essays) have been more or less impacted, while university presses and educational publishers report significant impacts on the viability of their sector.

Here are some excerpts from the statements of the sample's literary and general publishers:

> For a how-to guide publisher, legislative changes, including changes to the Copyright Act, had no impact.

> Since the adoption of the exceptions to the Copyright Act, our revenues from schools have decreased (compensation paid by schools to the publisher). We are not sure whether this has affected our revenues from Copibec.

> The exceptions added to the Copyright Act have resulted in a decline in our revenues from Copibec.

> In Quebec, everyone (except Université Laval) committed to continuing with Copibec. Not too much impact: It did not show in our case. Revenues held steady.

> We did not feel the impact of the changes to the Copyright Act. It must be said that we registered late for Copibec and Access Copyright.

> The impact of changes to the Copyright Act on our company has been minimal. Ultimately, this is difficult to measure other than by analyzing changes in revenues from Copibec.

While the economic impacts of these new exceptions to the Copyright Act for these literary and general publishers have been relatively small, it is important to mention possible changes in the attitude (understood here as individuals' perceptions regarding copyright) of teachers toward content published by publishers.

> The damage that may have been caused by these changes is probably to be found in the teachers' perception of the fact that we can do what we want with publishers' contents.

For educational publishers and university presses, the economic damage is real, measurable, and significant. Indeed, the exceptions allow a teacher to use publishers' content without having to pay either the author or publisher. However, this content is developed specifically for teaching students: It goes without saying that it is relevant, more so than the content literary and general publishers publish, and it also goes without saying that, with the option of buying this content or using it under one of the exceptions adopted, the latter prevails. In addition to the economic impact of these exceptions, there is collateral damage. Authors, faced with the impossibility of being fairly remunerated for their works, publish less and less, and this leaves the door wide open to content from foreign publishers: In the end, students are using foreign content.

> As a result of exceptions to the Copyright Act, our revenues from Access Copyright are in free fall.

> The Copyright Act, for a primary and secondary school publisher, is vital. However, at this time, particularly given the exceptions adopted under the Conservatives, the Act is not good. This law has adverse impacts on the viability of educational publishers: Contents can be reproduced without the author and the publisher receiving compensation. As a result, authors are less interested in developing content and, in fact, that results in less and less Canadian content being published, all to the benefit of foreign publishers.

> For college and university publishing, this is the same issue as for primary and secondary school publishing. It is an issue of the sector's profitability, viability, and vitality.

Publishers outside Quebec are disadvantaged

In 1981, Quebec passed the Act Respecting the Development of Québec Firms in the Book Industry (Book Act). The purpose of this law was to make books accessible throughout the province and to professionalize the actors in the field. Although the book industry in Quebec is a balanced ecosystem, despite foreign competition and the Pure Players option, it is possible to give partial credit to this law, which has somewhat protected Quebec's players in the industry. However, this law is unique in Quebec: There are no similar laws in other provinces, particularly in the bordering provinces of New Brunswick and Ontario. However, study participants refer to an imbalance created by this law between publishers in Quebec and others outside Quebec.

> The various laws in the province of Ontario do not encourage the maintenance and development of the French language, and in the long run this can have an impact on our activities. Schools in Ontario are also underfunded: No book purchases. There is also no Book Act, as in Quebec, which leads, for example, to negotiations[v] with booksellers when schools buy books. TPlayers in the book industry are less protected in Ontario than in Quebec.

> Quebec's Book Act has harmful effects for New Brunswick publishers: New Brunswick schools order directly from Quebec publishers, whereas the opposite is not possible (because of the Act). Publishers outside of Quebec suffer from a lack of visibility in Quebec: In our own province, we are less visible than Quebecers. This creates two realities where publishers in Quebec can do things that those in New Brunswick cannot do and vice versa.

The SODEC tax credit program

Many grant programs support book production, both provincially and federally. Among these programs, in Quebec, one of the most important remains the tax credit for book publishing program (in French only). Although, during the period studied, the program changed to make digital books eligible, the program considers digital books that do not have a paper edition to be ineligible. In other words, the program does not recognize the publication of a book in digital format other than in its adapted version of the book in paper format. This could hinder the development of digital publishing in Quebec.

> SODEC's tax credit program does not subsidize a book in digital format unless it is accompanied by its paper version. This makes it impossible to seize opportunities to publish content solely in digital format.

Canada Council for the Arts grant programs

The grant programs provided to the Canada Council for the Arts' publishers underwent a major overhaul shortly after 2015. The eligibility criteria for titles and the nature of eligible projects themselves have changed significantly, and this has had a major impact on some publishers, notably those publishing essays.

> University presses have been excluded from some of the Canada Council for the Arts' grant programs. Today, no program supports the translation of a university book.

> Changes to the Canada Council for the Arts' program (they have gone from artistic merit to the development of artists' careers): It helped us because that's what we were already doing. This greatly increased our grant revenues from the Council, and this enabled us to hire staff. However, we have noted that the grant revenues from other agencies have stagnated over time.

> The Canada Council for the Arts' investments in many digital programs especially benefit major organizations. This forces small structures to outsource rather than hire because expertise is absent internally.

Programs that do not reflect the new realities of the digital environment

Participants also mentioned the lack of programs that enable book publishers to invest in the development of purely digital content (without its paper companion).[vi] In addition to SODEC's tax credit program (see above), participants mentioned a certain desert in this area.

> The development of reference content and reference software is not subsidized either by the Book Fund or by the Media Fund. This impedes our development at home and abroad.

Accessible book standards

The participants made little mention of the new and upcoming accessibility standards that will eventually be adopted (by 2025) in Europe. As of 2025, in principle, the European Union will impose minimum accessibility standards on all publishers wishing to sell books in digital format across Europe. As with any new book format, this will have many implications: technical adaptation of all titles in a publisher's catalogue; training of sales and marketing staff, as well as publishing and production staff; and the possible adoption of a new format (ePub4). These adaptations will require heavy investments for publishers and it is quite likely that, in light of the low profitability of digital books in general, several will stop selling digital books in Europe due to lack of resources.[vii]

> We are closely monitoring the obligation for accessible books in Europe in 2025. This will add more steps to the production flow, and thus more production time, and it will place us at a cost-benefit disadvantage.

Part 5: The impacts of COVID-19

Since March 2020, the planet has been dealing with a pandemic. To address this, governments have adopted health rules, which have had many impacts on individuals and businesses. Publishers did not escape this.

Unavailability of human resources

Indirectly, labour shortages caused by COVID-19 have impacted publishers. Labour shortages experienced by printers have had the greatest impact on publishers, since they are unable to maintain their usual production capacity. This decrease in the production capacity of printers has caused production delays for publishers.

> The staff shortages experienced by our suppliers, particularly printers, as a result of COVID have impacted our production schedules: We have experienced delays.

Reorganization of production and publication schedule

At times, since the emergence of the pandemic, many businesses have been forced to close, including bookstores. This caused publishers to postpone the publication of certain books and to adjust their production schedule. These adjustments were made in the face of the inability to promote works in a traditional way, i.e., through events, which often take place not only in bookstores, but also at launches (restaurants) and book fairs. In addition, it was mentioned that several bookstores took advantage of the closure of their business to consolidate their inventories and, as a result, return many books to publishers, which had an impact on publishers' net revenues.

> That said, COVID has not had an impact on our activities in general, but we still had to temporarily reorganize our editorial program and its production, and this is mainly due to the inability to promote them through events, book fairs, etc. In addition, we did not receive much government support, but we spent less on promotional activities.

> We had to reorganize our publishing programs (sometimes they were dropped).

> We noted that bookstores that had to close during the COVID pandemic returned several books: In a way, they cleaned up their inventories, which affected our net income.

Migration of procurement methods[viii]

The migration of consumer procurement patterns from physical locations to the digital environment was widely discussed by study participants. Given the inability to procure books from their usual businesses, many consumers have turned to new procurement methods, including purchasing books in digital format online and purchasing books in paper format online. This migration forced publishers to adapt their marketing and communication strategies to capture the impacts of this sales migration to the digital environment. Since the pandemic is not over, there is reason to question whether consumer procurement behaviours will continue.

> Today, our sales from Amazon are equal to that from Costco, and that's saying something; what is more, we do not engage in promotional activities to sell items on Amazon, while sales from Costco require significant investments. We believe that buying online and locally has increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

> We also saw an increase in the sale of books in digital format, as well as a decrease in the sale of books in paper format:

Before COVID	After COVID	After COVID (current)
70% of sales (paper)	30% of sales (paper)	70% of sales (paper)
30% of sales (num)	70% of sales (num)	30% of sales (num)

> This has affected book promotion (communications) and marketing in the school environment. We have put more effort into the digital environment and in traditional media.

> COVID may force us to look at book fairs differently in the future. Perhaps we will participate in them in a more modest way.

> COVID has led to an increase in sales of digital books at our company.

> COVID has moved our promotional activities to the digital environment (virtual activities); it has reduced the number of events, but otherwise our activities have not changed much.

> There has been an increase in the use of the digital environment and an increase in online purchases. We believe that this has put us at a disadvantage because we believe that we are less visible online (in a minority Francophone community, it is worse).

Less cultural competition for books

The various closures imposed by governments since the beginning of the pandemic have greatly affected cultural sites such as theatres, museums, movie theatres, etc. These closures have reduced the offerings of cultural products and services to which consumers normally have access. Faced with thiese limited offerings, it seems that consumers have largely turned to reading, and this has had a positive impact on publishers' revenues.

> We took advantage of COVID in that individuals turned to reading because they did not have access to other cultural activities.

> It seems that books have become more important (compared to other cultural practices) in people's lives in Quebec, but not in New Brunswick: School purchases did not take place as usual; book fairs were cancelled, as was the presence in libraries; book marketing was limited, which made us even less visible in bookstores.

> In addition, in general, the two years of COVID were two excellent years in terms of both grant revenues and sales. There has been less competition from other cultural sectors (which has given us ample space), and our promotional costs (events in particular) have been considerably reduced.

Similarly, schools, colleges, and universities were closed many times, and this also positively affected educational publishers.

> During COVID, at several times, colleges and universities were closed, and this had a positive impact on our incomes: Students had more difficulty getting used editions of books (college and university books) so then turned to new editions, which led to an increase in our sales.

However, it appears that these increases in sales have not been experienced by all types of publishers. Some participants reported experiencing significant decreases in sales of certain types of books during the pandemic.

> While literary publishers' sales have increased sharply, our sales (of how-to books) have declined significantly. Of course, this decrease in sales is also due to the fact that we had to cut production.

> Our "theatre" collection was severely affected: We published when the play was performed in theatres. Of course, the closure of theatres forced us to stop the production of this literary genre at our company.

Part 6: Skills that are lacking?

Given the many changes of all kinds that have impacted publishers over the last 15 years, it appears that many publishers have some learning to do. This learning concerns the digital environment, and participants referred to these lessons to learn as continuous learning in the face of the constant flow of innovations in the digital environment.

Communication and online marketing skills

Publishers want to communicate with readers as best they can. Since readers have adopted online purchasing and search behaviours over the past few years, publishers have been increasingly channeling communication efforts over the Internet, but this requires resources that are sometimes lacking. Participants also mentioned a lack of skills to develop e-commerce:

> In terms of promotion—meaning the methods and tools used for promoting a book—the change has been dramatic. There has been a major change in this area. Although we do not lack skills in this area, we do lack experience. In addition, new ways of promoting books do not eliminate [translation] "old" ones, especially in terms of media relations. Moreover, we lack the resources to establish effective media relations: Our goal is to address this within three years.

> The digital environment is increasingly using photos and videos: This requires our teams to learn new skills. For example, the social network TikTok: We have to learn about it. We need a person responsible for all digital activities (SEO, digital production, transactional site, social media), but this requires significant investments.

> We are lacking e-commerce skills.

> What we are lacking is not skills but time. The time needed to manage digital products and activities: We did it for digital books in the past, and now we are doing it for so-called accessible books. We need to hire, and we also need an advantageous cost/benefit ratio, which is not the case today.

Part 7: About the viability of publishers

While study participants report that they are seeing the emergence of certain threats to their viability, including open access for university presses, all remain enthusiastic about the future and believe the viability of their business is not currently threatened.

The influence of the nature, size, and age of the organization

The company's organizational structure was cited as an influencing factor in terms of viability. A publisher from a university or the public sector operates in a context different from that of a private company or a sole proprietor.

> We are owned by a university centre, so we are not eligible for grants. This leads us to think about our organizational structure. To ensure our long-term viability, we are considering turning the organization into an NPO.

> We have access to a treasury (head office), and this enables us to weather storms.

Also, publishers' revenues generally come from three sources: sales of new titles, sales of catalogue titles, and grant revenues. While new publishers can benefit from both new releases and grant revenue, their catalogue of titles has yet to be developed and they will only be able to derive a significant portion of their income from it after several years of publishing. The age of the publishing firm influences a publisher's viability.

> Our viability is not threatened. We have a large collection (catalogue), and this is a significant cushion (of revenue) for the company. The book sector is in good shape, especially when compared to other cultural sectors. Digital technology has not had the effects that have been seen in other sectors, particularly music. Finally, grants are needed: They help us a lot.

Government assistance

Government assistance, whether in the form of grants, refundable tax credits or the like, remains essential to the viability of publishers, regardless of the genre published.

> The outlook is brighter than it was 15 years ago, despite the challenges. Increases in revenues from the CCA have changed the game for us. Other revenues remained stable.

> Finally, grants are needed: They help us a lot.

Human resources and succession as pillars of viability

Study participants identified issues related to the transfer of knowledge and skills as critical to the viability of their organizations. Publishing is both art and science, and the transfer of knowledge and skills, whether in a context of replacement or entrepreneurial succession, is a factor in the success of the organization.

> That said, labour is scarce, and we are losing skills (retirement): This raises the issue of knowledge and skills transfer, and it is a major issue for us.

> I feel that the company is still vulnerable, although we are healthy and there is still potential for growth. We are aware of issues regarding succession: succession issues. It is very difficult to find successors when a company is maintaining a fragile equilibrium and this issue is tenfold in a minority context.

Part 8: What information is not available to adequately answer the previous questions? How can this be remedied?

Statistics on cultural industries are scarce, and the book industry is not immune to this (the last economic picture of publishing dates from 1998 to 1999).[ix] Study participants complain about this, particularly about the impossibility of comparing their financial results with industry averages.

However, the statistical data that pertains to their online activities is identified as the data they most need. Indeed, publishers want to better understand the impact of their online communication and marketing activities, and they also want to better understand:

> Despite all our efforts, we cannot measure the impact on our readership and/or on the discoverability of our works.

> The same has been noted regarding social media: A lot of energy, effort, time, but what impact does it have?

> We need data that documents online book piracy.

Participants also spoke of the need to better understand the impacts of changes in sales networks and also of the need for tools to better analyze and understand the market.

> We are currently seeing an increase in bookstores: We have no information to measure the impact of this increase, but this creates more sales opportunities.

> We have a great deal of difficulty estimating our print runs as well as the sales potential of our titles, and this is because we lack tools to better analyze and understand the market.

Conclusion

In conclusion to this study, which had the objective of identifying the developments that have impacted the activities of Canada's French-language publishers, it is not useful to create a second overview; instead we will open up a broader reflection on the future, particularly in order to highlight the themes that need to be monitored.

While the changes in the book market that have influenced publishers over the last 15 years have mainly concerned the marketing of books in a context of overproduction, it is likely that structural changes could take place in the relatively near future. Since the early 1980s, the French-language book industry has grown mainly around the increase in national French-language production and its availability across the territory through the structuring efficient sales networks. This constant increase in production is now identified by publishers as a context of "overproduction," which we have discussed at length in the results. It is this "overproduction" that could lead to structural changes in the industry, particularly in terms of distribution and marketing: We already see publishers who promote and market for themselves and others that have begun [translation] "over-marketing" activities, i.e., public relations activities carried out toward booksellers in order to increase awareness of their works and gain greater better exposure among retailers.

Similarly, the technological changes that are referred to by all publishers mainly concern publishers' difficulties in monitoring the behaviour of readers in the digital environment, whether it be online shopping habits or communication strategies in the digital environment. However, data that could help publishers better understand readers and their online behaviours and habits are rare, even non-existent; moreover, publishers are not equipped to collect, process, and analyze them. Studies of audiences, both readers and non-readers, could certainly be useful for publishers, particularly for the possible development of B2C business models where the publisher would expand its direct sales to consumers through the digital environment.

Finally, other elements remain to be monitored in the near future, and these have been referred to by some of the publishers interviewed as part of this study. This is a possible amendment to the Quebec Status of the Artist Act and the emergence of artificial intelligence in the publishing field, including educational publishing. For more than two years, the Government of Quebec has been considering a major revision of the Status of the Artist Act. Among the items to be revised, it is likely that the government will force publishers to adopt a standard contract with authors. Various submissions were made, including that of the Association nationale des éditeurs de livres. Possible changes could affect publishers, particularly financially.

Footnotes

[i] We identify the term “overproduction” with quotation marks to emphasize its dual nature. Overproduction can be seen as negative from a commercial standpoint, but it can also be seen as positive in terms of diversity and cultural richness.
[ii] Luckerhoff, J. and F. Guillemette (2012). Méthodologie de la théorisation enracinée : Fondements, procédures et usages, Quebec: University of Quebec presses.
[iii] Translation note: In the French language, the terms “diffuseur” (marketer/sales teams) and “distributeur” (distributor) are two separate activities, which do not have an exact equivalent in the English language nor in practice within the English-language book industry itself. French-language distributors are at times both a distributor and a marketer/sales team (“diffuseur”), meaning they have dedicated sales teams that market and promote books for the distributor, which goes beyond the usual activities of a distributor, such as warehousing, fulfillment and delivery of orders. In the English-language distribution market, the distributor exclusively upholds the responsibilities of distribution and does not undertake marketing and promotion of books like French-language marketer-distributors.
[iv] A Pure Player is a business whose activities are concentrated solely on the Internet. Amazon is the leading representative in the French-language book industry in Canada.
[v] The Act Respecting the Development of Québec Firms in the Book Industry does not allow such negotiations: All institutions have an obligation to buy books at the publisher’s public price, without any discount.
[vi] It should be noted that changes were made to the Canada Book Fund in 2015 to make only digital content eligible for funding.
[vii] It is important to note that at the initiative of the Canada Book Fund, $22 million in assistance is being offered to publishers to increase access to books.
[viii] For more information on book procurement methods, see “Le choix d’un mode d’approvisionnement en livres des Québécois : les temps, l’espace et les usages (in french only).”
[ix] Ménard, M. (2001). Les chiffres des mots, Société de développement des entreprises culturelles du Québec.