

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Books report: Despite e-books' swift rise, print still dominates market

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Amazon's now selling more e-books for its Kindle e-reader than paperbacks or hardcovers. Barnes & Noble's Nook e-reader is making gains. Bankrupt Borders is closing brick-and-mortar stores. Yet there's surprising life left between physical books' covers.

Providing insight into print and e-books' standing are the following excerpts from the Trib's phone conversation with Kelly Gallagher. He's vice president, publisher services, for New Providence, N.J.-based R.R. Bowker (*bowker.com*), which conducts market research for publishers and traces its more-than-130-year history to Publishers Weekly's founding.

On e-books' pros and cons:

Obviously there is this "e-nirvana" that awaits publishers, where ... all things "e" make their lives much simpler; they focus less on supply chain management and more on content development. ... (T)here's savings to be had (with e-books) and the profitability is certainly there ... yet nobody wants to walk away from a world that still has 20 percent hardcover print books that people demand, and so ... publishers will become more profitable with "e," but the challenge of how they get there is a real big issue. ... And the bet that retail and publishing are taking is that ... people ultimately will buy more. At this point, we see it as more units, but because of (e-books') lower price point and not significantly more units, we see more cannibalization going on, or substitution purchasing, vs. them suddenly now buying twice as much as they used to buy in print.

On music-industry analogies:

Who in the world would have been caught dead with a cassette when CD came out? So literally, the new technology "obsoleted" the old technology. I don't see that happening with books. Print books are still a very good hardware device. You can drop them in the ocean and they don't short out, they don't run out of battery life and, you know, they still are ... and will always be a very functional way of communicating concepts, content and ideas.

On e-books in the overall market:

We're definitely on the sharp side of ... the curve right now, so (e-books) will

continue to grow, but ... 86 percent of all titles sold today are in print. ... Textbooks, college textbooks and business books ... have had a much slower uptick because of the technology and even just the reluctance of the potential buyer to want to engage digitally. ... (I)t's very hard to still take notes in e-books, it's not the easiest thing to flip from section to section or page to page. ... For the younger generation ... they're just not used to learning in that environment, so we really can't assume, just because they're technology junkies, that they want to learn that way, too. ... We're beginning to see some signs, especially in a study we did just recently of young adults, of "digital fatigue." ... When we say that young adults don't read, well, it's just that they don't read what we want them to buy, but literally their whole day is spent reading -- text messages, Facebook -- they read more than we ever dreamed or ever did ... when we were their age. ... But the reality is that they're reading all the time, and so those that do like to read, actually we still see that they have a strong preference for print, because they're just digitally tired and they see a special comfort in print books, that it's nice to just unplug for them for a while.

On which e-reader has the upper hand:

Well, certainly the Kindle does ... they were first to market and they certainly are in the dominant position, although ... if you looked at the last couple months, who's gained the most market share, it's been Nook. ... (W)e recently did a customer satisfaction survey, and the Nook scored higher than the Kindle as far as overall customer satisfaction and functionality and the like ... and so I think the Nook has really taken some good strides but they're really ... up against a Goliath at this point. ... While price of books is the No. 1 reason why people switch over (to e-books), price of device is the No. 1 reason why people still have not switched over.

NEW PAGES TO TURN

Rawhide Down: The Near Assassination of Ronald Reagan

by Del Quentin Wilber

(Henry Holt and Co.)

This high-profile release -- a prize-winning police reporter's minute-by-minute account of the events of March 30, 1981, and their aftermath -- has been excerpted in The Wall Street Journal. It's the subject of an overwhelmingly positive "Amazon Exclusive" review by Bill O'Reilly, plus numerous other reviews and media reports. And it's endorsed by Bob Woodward and George F. Will, among other luminaries. Incorporating the Secret Service code name for America's 40th president in its title, "Rawhide Down" draws on exclusive new interviews to add exhaustive detail to the story of how Ronald Reagan became the only serving U.S. president to survive being shot in an assassination attempt. Del Quentin Wilber makes more vivid than ever just how close Reagan came to death, how one Secret Service agent's quick thinking and skilled surgeons saved Reagan's life, and how the shooting left White House figures

scrambling to determine whether the nation was under attack.

The False Promise of Green Energy

by Andrew P. Morriss, William T. Bogart, Roger E. Meiners and Andrew Dorchak

(Cato Institute)

Concise at 224 pages, "The False Promise of Green Energy" should equip any reader who's properly skeptical with plenty of ammunition to shoot down the arguments of those who buy into what the free-market Cato Institute calls the "alluring future" of "more jobs in a cleaner environment" promised by green-energy proponents. Its four academic authors -- who are in the fields of law, business and economics at the University of Alabama, Maryville College, the University of Texas at Arlington and Case Western Reserve University -- examine such proponents' claims and find them wanting, exposing the "underlying politics and gamesmanship lurking below the surface" of a "large, vocal alliance" of "corporations, politicians, and environmentalists" advocating "huge taxpayer subsidies ... under the rubric of green jobs." It would be better, they say, for America to rely on "competitive forces ... to provide ever greater environmental quality and energy efficiencies."

SHELF LIFE: AMERICA & ITS PASTIME

However eternal fans' hopes spring with the Pirates' season opener on Friday, baseball both influences and reflects societal trends when it falls short of the values "America's pastime" supposedly embodies -- teamwork, fair play, sportsmanship, hard work.

The Negro Leagues, racial segregation personified, were rendered moot when Jackie Robinson broke Major League Baseball's color barrier, which encouraged the broader civil rights movement. Pirates legend Roberto Clemente heralded an influx of Latin players that spotlighted issues still echoing in immigration debates.

The legal demise of baseball's reserve clause led to free agency, with implications for all big-league pro sports -- witness today's NFL labor dispute.

Taxpayer financing of stadiums, including PNC Park, remains a topic of debate. And baseball's antitrust exemption gives Congress license for such meddling as its controversial 2005 hearings on players' steroid use.

However the Pirates fare, readers can win with these titles about baseball and society, selected especially for A Page of Books readers by manager Karen Rossi and her staff at Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's Downtown & Business branch.

Labor and Capital in 19th Century Baseball

by Robert P. Gelzheiser

(McFarland & Co., 2006)

Shades of Glory: The Negro Leagues and the Story of African-American Baseball

by Lawrence D. Hogan

(National Geographic Society, 2006)

Maz and the '60 Bucs: When Pittsburgh And Its Pirates Went All the Way

by Jim O'Brien

(J.P. O'Brien, 1993)

Kiss It Good-Bye: The Mystery, the Mormon, and the Moral of the 1960 Pittsburgh Pirates

by John Moody

(Shadow Mountain, 2010)

Clemente: The Passion and Grace of Baseball's Last Hero

by David Maraniss

(Simon & Schuster, 2006)

Forbes Field: Essays and Memories of the Pirates' Historic Ballpark, 1909-1971

edited by David Cicotello and Angelo J. Louisa

(McFarland & Co., 2007)

Ball Four: My Life and Hard Times Throwing the Knuckleball in the Big Leagues

by Jim Bouton

(World Publishing Co., 1970)

Foul Ball: My Life and Hard Times Trying to Save an Old Ballpark

by Jim Bouton

(Bulldog Publishing, 2003)

Owners Versus Players: Baseball and Collective Bargaining

by James B. Dworkin

(Auburn House Publishing, 1981)

A Whole Different Ball Game: The Sport and Business of Baseball

by Marvin Miller

(Carol Publishing, 1991)

American Icon: The Fall of Roger Clemens & the Rise of Steroids in America's Pastime

by Teri Thompson, Nathaniel Vinton, Michael O'Keeffe and Christian Red

(Knopf, 2009)

A Page of Books, written and compiled by Alan Wallace, appears on the last Sunday of each month.

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