The Future of Publishing Industry in Iran: Challenges and Opportunities ahead of Traditional Publishers in their Transformation into Modern and Electronic Publishers

Hossein Faraj Pahlou (Professor, Department of Knowledge and Information Science, Shahid Chamran University, Ahwaz, Iran). farajpahlou@gmail.com
Dariush Matlabi (Assistant Professor, Islamic Azad University, Yadegar-e Emam, Shahrre rey Branch, Iran). dariushmatlabi@yahoo.com
Hossein Asgharnejad (PhD candidate, Knowledge and Information, Shahid Chamran University, Ahwaz, Iran. And Head of the Library Faculty of Science, Bu Ali Sina University, Hamedan, Iran). asgharnejad@yahoo.com

Abstract

Aim: the aim of the present research is to identify the present evolutions of the publishing industry and the challenges and opportunities existing in its way to transform from its traditional state to a modern and electronic state.

Method: This research was undertaken based on the findings of the review of the relevant literature on the publishing industry and its current developments.

Findings/ Results: The Iranian publishers have faced many challenges and difficulties in entering the modern era of the publishing industry and using the current technologies of which could be mentioned the lack of required knowledge
and expertise in the managers and the staff of the publishing houses, tendency to hold with the current situation and resisting change, economic crisis and recession in the publishing market, lack of a written legal system that supports authors and publishers of the electronic works, and weaknesses existing in the infrastructures of the modern industry. Publishers have the following opportunities: economic evolutions caused by new approaches publishers take towards the publishing market and customers’ demands, applying new publishing methods such as electronic publishing and digital publishing, demand based publication, hybrid publication, and participation of publishers in collection development projects in libraries and provision of both, print and electronic information sources for educational and academic centers.

**Keywords:** Iran, Publishing Industry, Publishers, Opportunities, Challenges, Electronic Publishing

1. **Introduction**

Articles, reports, and conferences on the future of publishing are increasingly common; genuinely useful insights into the industry’s future, however, remain comparatively rare. To be truly valuable, such insights need to be practical and applicable, rather than speculative and theoretical. They need to be informed by an accurate and detailed knowledge of today’s publishing business, and of the problems and opportunities it faces.

The Future of Publishing program aims to help the industry play an active part in shaping that future, offering practical insights into the products, services, and businesses that may be a part of it. Its contribution is both informed and made distinctive by its five key approaches: making new products and services; giving insight into the future; showcasing and promoting innovation; exploring new revenue streams; and facilitating cross-sector partnerships.
The aim of the present research is to identify the present evolutions of the publishing industry and the challenges and opportunities existing in its way to transform from its traditional state to a modern and electronic state.

In their lucid look at the book publishing industry, Coser et al. (1982, p. 3) noted that “Ideas are the brain children of individuals; but books, in which ideas are given concrete shape so as to be conveyed to their intended audience, are the products of the collective work of members of publishing firms that specialize in the production and distribution of books”. However, they also observed that “in an age of electronic media, book publishing no longer occupies the preeminent cultural position it enjoyed until the Second World War”.

However, in the years since Coser et al. wrote their book, the book publishing industry has continued to thrive. We observe that its economic growth has been impressive over the last 30 years, even during periods of general economic downturn. In the USA, the greatest growth periods, in terms of book title output, were the 1960s and 1970s. Title output grew from 25,784 in 1963 to 53,380 in 1983. It reached a peak in 1987, culminating with 56,027 titles. The three consecutive years saw a decline in the figures, bottoming out in 1990, when total output was only 46,743. In recent years, title output has been hovering at about 49,000. In terms of dollar sales, the growth was even more spectacular. Revenue escalated sharply from $1.68 billion in 1963 to $3.2 billion by 1973, and was worth $8.6 billion in 1983. Between 1983 and 1991, it almost doubled, to $16.1 billion (Baker, 1994a; Ink, 1994). The growth rate was approximately 6.6 percent in 1993, but is projected to have only a 4.3 per cent sales increase to $18.16 billion in 1994.

It is difficult to generalize about book publishing industry, due to its striking heterogeneity. Its various sectors are significantly different from one another. Each branch operates in a distinctive environment, faced with unique challenges and criteria for success. Yet, it is a common fallacy to think about publishing in terms
of popular trade books. As Table I shows, dollar sales of trade books are actually eclipsed by those of college textbooks and professional reference works combined.

Many drastic changes have taken place in the industry in the past 15 years or so. The first major change occurred with the advent of personal computing. Desktop publishing changed the way the book is written and edited. New technology, too, has affected the way it is printed, bound, and distributed. In addition, shifts in consumer demand have affected the nature and volume of books produced. On a macro level, the growth in the number of merger and acquisition activities among publishing houses has also altered the basic structure of the industry. With all these changes, it is no longer the staid and lumbering industry that many perceive it to be. Indeed, the onset of the information superhighway is a harbinger of many more changes in the structure of the industry.

**The evolution of book publishing**

The history of the modern book began c. 1455 with the printing of the Forty-Two Line Bible, by Johannes Gutenberg (Greenhood and Gentry, 1936). Early printing after the invention of the movable type was concerned primarily with reprinting of religious, legal, and classical texts already available in manuscripts. However, by the time of the Reformation in 1660, books had become a force for change and influence (Schreyer, 1985). The power of books lies in their ability to disseminate information quickly and to a wide audience.

The structure of the publishing industry then was also much simpler. As noted by Coser et al. (1982, p. 5): “Until the rise of the mass market for books in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, book publishing was a simple cottage industry. An author would approach a bookseller-printer – these two roles were not yet differentiated – and contract for the printing and selling of his book. Frequently the costs were borne, wholly or in part, by a patron of the author, who thus ensured that the book would reach its intended audience among the cultural and social élite of the day.”
The expanding market for books was due to higher levels of literacy as well as a decline of the price of books as a result of economies of scale and improved production methods. With this, the printer-bookseller was gradually phased out, and replaced by modern publishing houses. Typically, the early publishing houses were run by a single publisher, with the assistance of family members. It was not until the market for books in the USA expanded in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when it became a true mass market, that publishing houses took on more formal structures that have survived until this day (Coser et al., 1982).

2. Research methodology
The research is library method based on studying the texts and reviewing the theoretical foundations and also surveying literature and specialized texts in the field of publishing industry in Iran and current developments in it. In order to study the literature, more than 40 sources of information are included; English and Persian articles in print and electronic, books, scientific and research material on the sites, conferences and lectures and meetings and also the results of conferences and meetings. Among a number of them some note-takings were done related to the necessity and importance, and then extracted information were classified and organized and this extracted information were exploited in writing this review article.

3. Take a look at developments in the era of communication and information dissemination
A. The emergence of computers and information networks and its impact on the dissemination of information
The publishing industry is affected by the phenomenon of information technology, gradually is converted to the new media to be able to change the speed, volume, accuracy, transfer and receive of the data; and on the other hand, the publishing
industry take more distance with the paper works and the paper printed written forms.

Therefore, the expert in the late 20th century started reporting about the world of paper, paperless organization, the advent of e-books, world Wide Web communications which they all mean an end of the printed book. Interestingly, the first decade of the 21st century also said the speed of transformation of the publishing industry and the emergence of new methods and technologies give more speed to such changes.

Desktop publishing, digital publishing, self-publishers, publishing with needing basis, e-books, e-journals, e-shop internet book, electronic reading device, website, etc. all were effects of the entry into the paperless world in publishing.

**B. Changes in publishing models and the birth of new publishing platforms**

The publishing industry, like any other industry, needs innovative models and new business to fill the existing weaknesses. Business in the media industry is mysterious and ambiguous. In fact, this business is a game that new players can be entered to knock their rivals in the very intense and ongoing competition. There are several rules that must be learned them to overcome them (Susan, 2003: 10; quoted in Naimi, 1391: 43).

In the new publishing models, the middleman and chains of traditional models have been removed and the author and publisher loop have been immediately closed to each other. These developments have changed the prospects for the publishing industry and the manufacturing industries, as well as some valuable rings publishing chain. It is said that by eliminating middlemen and products, the authors of the relationship between publishers and readers, are producing redefinition of the transfer and the balance of power (Jeffress and Lyle, 2012: 257).

In studies and scientific literature published in English, we encounter to such words as static and dynamic publishing (Little, 2013). Dynamic publishing is considered
as the characteristics of the postmodern era in publishing and included knowledge and abilities among professionals in the publishing industry which is able to produce information in any shape or form possible through new media and it actually answers the growing and diverse needs of data for users and readers and seekers of information at any time and place.

The postmodern era characteristics can be summarized as: the electronic and digital publishing, publishers and publisher’s hybrid, and feature modern publishing and content creation, publishing unmediated and direct communication with readers, authors, publishing dynamic, expanding electronic resources, introduction of electronic reading devices and shift publishers and readers for the electronic publishing and open access to information.

The change and transformation, and elements related to the publication of three types of traditional, modern and post-modern can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Traditional publishing cycle, modern publishing and publishing postmodern (adapted from Azarang, 1389).
Joseph (2010) has fully depicted these developments as more in Figures 2 and 3. He compares traditional publishing to digital publishing, had shown "value chain" in the publishing industry in the following two modes.

In figure 2, the traditional publishing cycle includes writers, editors, publishers, and readers. An important gap in the value chain to digitization happened is the possibility of eliminating intermediaries. The major role of retailers and wholesalers in pure digital models is destroyed by the direct sales publisher to the reader.

![Figure 2: The traditional publishing industry value chain (supply, Joseph, 2010)](image)

This can lead to major cost savings in the publishing industry Because the costs associated with distribution are minimized (figure 3). But some questions about the role of intermediaries in the value chain publishing must be correctly answered since the newer models of publishing intermediaries with the new roles are emerging.
On the other side, the distributors in continuous publication are removed, and the distributors themselves as content providers while they are not the major publishers of the works - like Amazon- have emerged. The end user played a more active role in the management to access tools to read digital text. This has provided the way for wireless two-way communication between publishers and readers, and the readers themselves can act as content creators and distributors. In figure 4, digital publishing model is depicted in a network environment. In this model, the digital publishing is in the form of online publishing forms, online, publishing on demand, self-publishing, publish on social networks, hybrid publishing. Digital publishing model in four related areas, including connect, services and products, access tools and skills and access to publishing, as infrastructure that support digital publishing, in the above diagram is displayed. In four rectangles associated with these areas, the sub-domains infrastructures and requirements have been identified.

Figure 4. Digital publishing models and supporting infrastructure network environment (Joseph, 2010)
4. The challenges facing the publishing industry

Customers are increasingly moving away from the media in certain formats, but at the same time do not want to be away from their content. This can be meant for the publishing industry, the publisher to provide its content and the suppliers, a shift from books to television, Internet, Global System Mobile Communication and wireless application protocol (Gregg, 2003: 70). This view has some fans and opponents in our country. A discussion among publishers and among policy makers and planners on publication is about this changing role. Some totally rejected to have any changes including even some Iranian renowned publishers, and some do not see any commitments in their own way and some totally unrelated the changes in the publishing world to internal publication. The opposite of this view are firm-believers of the electronic revolution who have persistently believed the end of life of paper media has arrived. Between these two extremes, a wide variety is placed that in a detailed study can determine the position and perspective of each view; and of course, this study is necessary to adopt a realistic policy about publishing.

A. Poor infrastructure and necessary conditions

Previous studies in the field of research suggest that the publishing industry infrastructure in the country and its context faced shortages and problems in order to enter the modern world of publishing. The issue and the nature and structure of the publishing industry in the country encountered some notable shortages including, financial, economic, cultural, publishing management problems and relevant human resources. The followings can be used as the most important factors affecting the research:

1. Lack of knowledge and expertise among Iranian publishers;
2. Inadequate training system for Higher education and Lack of planning for the education of creative, Efficient and familiar with technology personnel;
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3. Knowing a little bit about the publishing industry in the area of financing from the banks;
4. Lack of educational and cheap content tailored for Persian for the producers and interested persons;
5. Lack of adequate facilities to connect to global markets and the presence of the Apps supermarkets;
6. Low speed network connectivity and weakness in the global or national network covering the entire country;
7. Policies and government intervention in content production and finally weakening the private sector;
8. Weakness in domestic copyright enforcement and unfamiliarity with legal knowledge to participate in the global markets;
9. Lack of government support, at least as other similar cultural sector as a way out of the present deteriorating situation.

B. International copyright requirements

Compliance with laws related to reproduction which is global called rights related to copyright is a requirement of legal activity of electronic publishers; because failure to comply with these rules can trouble to main producers of books and electronic publishers and lead to reduced public confidence in this area. In Iran, many publishers positively submit the copyright law; however, it does not run smoothly. Today it’s not only reached a tipping point, but some Iranian publishers are trying to enter the publishing world markets or do they respect the copyright law as much as possible.

Joining copyright depends on the issue that Iran joins the World Trade Organization. That is outside the jurisdiction of publishers and government policies are concerned. But apart from the moral aspect of respecting the rights of publishers and authors from other countries, especially publishers who wish to participate in the publishing world, inevitably, copyright laws must be observed.
Actually, the need for external works and translations of these works is much more than mutual needs for publishers or foreign market works in Persian and translating them. This matter has created a dependency culture which will increase the vulnerability of the publishing industry.

C. economic crisis

The publishing economy in terms of economic issues has always faced with problems such as: capital accumulation, the inappropriateness of costs and revenues, the imbalance in subsidies, dependence on foreigners in terms of materials and devices, exports and imports, lack of proper coverage in the distribution network across the country, pricing problem, lack of regular updating of equipment and production facilities and technical knowledge slight and human resources work.

On the other hand, due to the multi-faceted publishing industry, it is affected by various spheres and mutually impact on these areas are observed. So, the economics of publishing factors ranging from economic and non-economic play a role. Economic factors are divided into two sections: one is the factors that affect supply and demand and the other social, cultural and political factors that influence the economy.

In the post-sanctions prospects, we should not hope publishing economy to return in an era of consolidation and economic prosperity as it had hoped in the short term. Since the sensitive and impressionable areas of culture hardly will erase the negative effects of the economic crisis because of sanctions and careful and deliberate planning and policy in the microeconomics and macroeconomics program is needed.

D. Crisis in the publishing management of Iran

Another important challenge and a serious crisis that the publishing industry is experiencing is aging of publishing management in Iran. Publishers with a long
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history of experience working in the current era and modern publishing is not enough to manage the publishing industry. Publication in Iran needs a radical revision and fit the new conditions on the international publishing. But unfortunately, its condition is not available or the desire for education in this field does not exist. In fact, some publishers have obstructive and negative role in the developments and changes in the publishing industry. The major reasons for this resistance can be in the absence of the necessary knowledge to managers and employees in the publishing, lack of infrastructure, Ethical and commitment and work ethic publishers with high experience, fear of new processes of publishing and economic considerations.

5. Opportunities facing modern publishing

Some opportunities according to Iranian publishing industry market is Included:

A. Publishers interaction with libraries and information centers

According to reshape of publishing from traditional to digital, today, we see that with the increasing use of digital tools (computers, mobile phones, tablets, etc.) there have been major changes in libraries. Libraries around the globe in 2014 lent more than 105 million books to the customers. according to this, libraries in the world in 2014 have purchased more than 137 million books from overcome system and added to their collection. Meanwhile 137 million books were purchased from the collection, and 32 million copies, audio books showed an increase of 38% in comparison with 2013.

Also among the statistics, the overcome company could specify the most popular electronic reading devices and also e-readers. Overcome company provided more 401 than million digital connectivity resources for libraries in the world that 43% connection occurred via tablets, 36% via desktop and 21% were connected via smartphone. Accordingly, tablet and smartphone encompasses 52% of the tool reading in libraries and obtained 64% of total traffic in 2014 (IBNA News Agency, 30 Day, 1393).
B. Economic opportunities ahead

Although there is a fear among publishers that E-book decline printed book sales, but publishers benefit with sufficient knowledge of e-book sales channel so that they both sell electronic and print books or they sell electronic books to print-customers at low prices.

These new marketing opportunities opens the door to new revenue side and it lets the publishers lead a large number of their readers to the printed version of the electronic versions of the same book.

With an optimized digital workflow, each e-book makes money to his publisher; In this way, other publishers are not dependent on his book sellers so long so that they can provide more the price for less well-known authors (Aptara, 2010).

Also, due to the high cost of paper and the costs associated with printing processes and indeed publication of electronic books in terms of economic will have significant savings. Although part of the costs of publishing books such as layout, edit and print books is so similar, because of the speed of the publishing process and publishing on demands will lead to economic savings.

It must be understood that the initial cost of a book is almost once while the cost of publishing a printed book according to the needed raw materials will be calculated for each book (Fahimi, 1391).

C. The availability of modern publishing information

Freedom and access to information are interpreted as "the oxygen of democracy". In fact, the freedom and the right, are not only guarantor of democracy, but they are the need and its. This is not a new discussion and it is rooted its evolution from modern society (Lus and Paqut, 2002).

Publishers by providing access to information through electronic publishing, play an important role in the world of information and on the other hand, it improved the growth of research in the scientific community and scholars by eliminating the
distance between author and reader and access to information everywhere and all the time.

By the 1980s, the publishers exclusively distribute and provide the information as printed resources at their disposal. The society using the information were directly linked to the publishers, booksellers and libraries. But in the late twentieth century and by the beginning of the twenty-first century, with the spread of information technologies at all levels of human life, the publishing industry are also affected by these technologies and readers’ tastes and trends that the required information regardless of the limitations of time and space are accessed.

D. Print on Demand

Print on demand or print on needs, is an important achievement of electronic publishing. This type of printing that actually can be named as floating publication or dissemination publication or applied or dynamic publishing, is a new method for the publishing industry that the publisher acts regarding the consumer market variable to publish a book in circulation.

In this way, publisher bears the cost and in a little time in limited numbers published their books and then he introduced and advertises the books in communication channels for supply and sales and marketing.

This new phenomenon in publishing was followed by some consequences, including: saving time, consumables such as paper; speed up the process of dissemination and accessibility of information; removing redundant rings in the process of publishing and the immediacy of relationship between author and reader; and avoiding storing books and preventing from sleeping the capital.
E. Publication hybrid or combination

The newest type of publication that has been created so far is a hybrid publication, and it is the combination of self-publishing and traditional publishing that make both publishers and authors more powerful. This publication type is considered dynamic publishing. While positively there are the benefits and drawbacks of traditional publishing model and individual publishing. The combination publishing allows the authors and publishers to combine each of the models in order to create a tailored approach and to adopt creative publishing to involve mutual gain offers to all parties. Combined publishing definition is difficult, because there are many possible variables. It is better not to say that it traditional is not publishing nor self-publishing, and it is employed as a combination of both of a unique approach project and a complete business.

6. Discussion and conclusion

In the new era and the advent of new technologies of information, massive amounts of information and communication continuously and electronically are available to all, the conditions have totally changed.

Today, consumers have more information, greater technical skills and broader powers to seek information. The phenomenon of electronic commerce is essential for the relationship between publishers with the reader community and there is a stiff competition between companies and publishing houses which they are referred as giant publishers.

This trend is inspired by taste and changes in informational behavior of readers. Now, the researchers, academics, executives and readers are increasingly turning to electronic sources in order to achieve the appropriate information in a timely manner, and the audience attitude change, have made Publishers to lay structural changes in the foundation framework that publishing company can produce
products based on the community which its main objective is to satisfy the demands of our customers and readers up to date.

And this changing roles caused a new model of relationship to be in the publishing chain which founded a new definition link in the chain whose main purpose is easier access of reader to information. This important achievement opened a clear way ahead authors, publishers and readers and that is transition from darkness of censorship and passing such significant obstacle to it.

Iran’s publication is in the transition from traditional publishing and entering the world of modern publishing although this development is faced with some potential faces challenges affected by the arrival of innovative technologies information which in recent years also been of great diversity.

At the global level these developments caused phenomenon in the publishing world which its works with the changes in the traditional publishing model can be viewed. These phenomena which were introduced in the form of platform research included:

Online publishing or publishing on the web, self-publishing, publishing based on needs, digital publishing, electronic publishing, publishing on social networks, hybrid publishing, electronic reading and developing tools and features are among these phenomena in the publishing industry.

But as mentioned, Iranian publishers and writers must overcome such obstacles to take advantage of these capabilities. Among these challenges, lack of infrastructure, poverty of informative literacy, publishing crisis in the economy, aging of publishing management and weaknesses can be outlined in the rules.

The transition from these challenges and threats, will open opportunities facing the publishing industry of the country that with attention to such opportunities and
understanding them, this crisis and linger industry will lead to its destiny. The opportunities can be outlined as follows:

__ More and better cooperation of publishers with libraries and information centers in providing the information resources in both print and electronic form;

__ Productivity and economic dynamism in publishing in modern electronic publishing that certainly will benefit all actors in the publication including in the business of publishers will lead to deducting the costs and increasing the profits, will accelerate the publishing process and will satisfy a greater range of readers by providing adequate resources;

__ Modern readers with diverse needs seeks to achieve the needed information in the shortest possible time with high-speed. Trump card in a competitive market is available to publishers and authors understand the situation in the today world and the so-called recognition of "the zeitgeist" providing them with new tools and features, various forms of information available to audience put and make information available to them.

__ needs based Publication is a development that increase different aspects of economic, whether cost of production and supply or marketing and sales, and also may improve the maneuverability of publishers and authors in proportion to market requirements;

__ Because the orders of issue of an information source such as books that certainly in this model the buyer of it is reliable, clear and definite, the economic security business professional market and profitability of author and publisher is certain.

__ Hybrid publication is the perfect option for publishers who are not able to accept the risks of electronic publishing. Hybrid Publishing make the traditional
publishers able to apply their print works according to market needs alongside to publish the electronic version. This will also make them capable of electronic publishers to some of their works will be published by traditional publishers.

7. Further Recommendations and Suggestions

At the end, some approaches for better entrance into the future of publication industry in Iran are mentioned:

__ Infrastructure of publishing industry in Iran is tied with government policies and programs and it makes any transformation and modernization of infrastructure in publishing industry impossible without the participation of the government and as well as the relevant legislation organization. For this reason, the government will and the legal backing can bring about fundamental change in building the necessary infrastructure. On the other hand, in the current situation that the country’s publishing industry, due to economic crisis (especially during the sanctions), incurred high damage, it is optimistic to think that in the course of these terms and entering into a post-sanction era, Iran publishing industry is will be spreading quickly in good and ideal condition. In macro view, transition from the economic crisis and the positioning of the publishing industry may not be possible for the government without the support and facilities.

__ The transformation of the publishing industry without the will of the body and its main rings, ie the publishers and authors, is impossible. Revolutionary innovation in publishing, will be practical when the publishers and writers recognized the importance and implications of these developments and accepted the venture into the world of modern publishing and failure to sole reliance on the traditional publishing and gradually provided its arrangements in an organizational and institutional series. Training techniques and the process of digital and electronic publishing and other modern methods of publishing in order to raise the
level of professional knowledge of publication managers and staff as well as the
creators and producers of information is essential. Thus, the importance of the
transition from traditional publishing model and looking into the modern world of
industry -as an inevitable fact - is accepted in the publication society of
practitioners.

New methods of publishing have created a revolution in the industry; and
changes in the publishing process and the ring forming the publishing chain are the
consequence of adopting the same methods and developments and changes.
Publishers are using new methods like digital publishing tools, electronic
publishing, hybrid publishing, web publishing network, dynamic publishing,
publishing by the need take the necessary interests; and even managed to increase
the profitability of their business and have more dominance on the business
publishing market.

The developments and changes in the publishing world is not the legally
profitable for Iran; because one of the important factors in the production and
dissemination of electronic information resources and supplying and selling them
at the level of world trade, particularly electronic commerce, is dependence on
international copyright law and its membership and acceptance. Iran, for political
and economic reasons, has not joined with the treaty. But now and by considering
the current situation, this area has been tightened for Iranian publishers’ activity
and in global competition of publishing, they are faced with the limitations and
obstacles. It seems, since that Iranian publishing industry view is at the global and
transnational look, requirements for Joining of copyright law seems more and more
necessary and important.

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