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## MINIPUBLISHING: NEW HOPE FOR STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

Ralph D. Winter

This article is not written for nor aimed at publishers. It is for all who in any way depend on books. It is an attempt, in part, to highlight those special problems of minipublishing, which is that band of the media spectrum which most concerns scholarly communication in the Christian world community. Recent evidence indicates a worsening situation mainly due to obstacles that can be considered physical or economic. The question arises: Will we use technology or be used by it?

Publishing, after all, is not a goal in itself. Christian efforts in the field of publishing and certainly mission efforts in particular seek to fulfill goals that are higher and larger than making authors famous, getting large numbers of books sold, etc. Publishing, properly understood, is an effective part of the nervous system of the body of humanity. As one of the communications media it must at times be rescued from the media professionals who tend to know more about the mechanics of transmitting a message than they can reasonably know about the various kinds of messages that must be transmitted.

Broadcasting delivers an oral message to an expanded audience. Publishing delivers a printed message to an expanded audience ranging from two people to millions. Let us assume that minipublishing simply deals with smaller readerships (not smaller books). 1/ Minibroadcasting would then deal with smaller audiences (not shorter programs or spot announcements). For example, when a telephone company connects two people to the opposite ends of a line, it is not broadcasting; when a postman delivers a personal letter from one person to another, he is not publishing. But the full spectrum of broadcasting and publishing does actually begin where the ordinary phone call and letter leave off. Both broadcasting and publishing multiply, duplicate, and extend the reach and scope of oral and written communication. Minipublishing is the portion of the media spectrum between the postman and the degree of multiplication involved in standard publishing. Shall we say minipublishing covers the range between 10 copies and 2,000? Something like that.

At the October meeting (1971) of the Society of Biblical Literature, Robert Funk, executive secretary, circulated a provocative analysis of angry problems and potential solutions in the realm of minipublishing. 2/ His paper confirms many of the suggestions below which were already in draft at the time Bruce Metzger mentioned it in a personal conversation. Subsequent discussion with Robert Funk himself was a rewarding interchange.

## I. OBSERVATIONS ABOUT PUBLISHING IN GENERAL THAT CAST LIGHT ON MINIPUBLISHING IN PARTICULAR

What would Ralph Nader say about the religious book publishers today? How would he analyze the almost uniformly gloomy predictions <sup>3/</sup> that have recently monopolized the coffee tables of the long-standing religious book departments? What would he say about the cost of books that has relentlessly escalated in our time from 1¢ to 2¢ to 3¢ to 4¢ to 5¢ per page and higher? At the very minimum Nader would likely point out that it is always a problem when the consumer does not have direct access to nor an understanding of the producer. This is one of the curious things about books. Everyone knows what a book is but few know quite how books come into being nor the reasons for varying bindings, page sizes, margins, prices, and price structures. Which one of us has not cast a stone? Which one of us has not pulled a book off a bookstore shelf, been stunned by the price and then looked accusingly at the number of pages to prove (by seeing how many pages per penny) that here was a case of highway robbery? Page count, as we shall see, has little to do with price.

On the other hand, what about the publisher that now has exclusive publishing rights on back issues of the International Review of Mission(s) and is offering them at \$21.00 per volume in paper binding? Or take the publisher who gained cloth bound rights to Latourette's History of the Expansion of Christianity and offered the seven volume set for \$120. In the latter case, fortunately, paper bound rights were overlooked and the set is now being sold in a quality Kivar binding for \$10. <sup>4/</sup> Without imputing evil intentions to anyone, it is quite possible for documents desperately needing distribution to be as effectively withheld from distribution by a very high price as if they had not been published at all. How this and other curious things can happen, especially in dealing with the mini-sized market, is the subject of observations that follow.

### A. Marketing conventions illogically penalize minipublishing

As we shall see, books printed in small quantities tend to cost a great deal more per copy. Nevertheless, conventional price structure inexorably pegs the retail price all the higher so that the bookstores can still get their conventional 40% discount. This discount is what allows stores to stock books, (that is, to put out their own capital, pay for the space to house and display them, etc.) or to order a single copy for someone if it is out of stock. But suppose the book costs more than average? Why should a customer have to pay the bookstore more than usual to order a more expensive book? That's a double penalty! The individual bookstore can compensate by discounting expensive books and sets of books that are ordered, not stocked. Either that or expensive purchases will all gravitate to the Religious Book Discount House! Publishers could help by adopting a convention that would operate on the 40% rule only between the limits of \$1.00 minimum and \$3.00 maximum mark-up on a book. This would not only allow a lot of formerly expensive books to be sold at a reasonable price, but would allow a lot of small books to be handled that also are penalized by the percentage system. A bookstore hates to see a customer ask for the special order of a book costing only \$1.00.

### B. Customer psychology damages minipublishing

The customer's price-per-page expectations kill certain excellent books. People apparently don't notice that the cost of a book is only very partially determined by its number of pages. People don't mind buying a paperback Columbia-Viking Desk Encyclopedia (2,016 pages, \$1.95) at the rate of 1/10¢ per page. What they cannot understand is a book costing 5¢ per page. Yet the same mechanism--size of market--produces both kinds of prices. So long as customers have a mind-set against paying more than a certain amount per page, certain kinds of documents can never be published by con-

ventional methods. People consent to paying more per seat when a party of five is travelling to Scotland than if they could charter a whole plane for the trip and fill every seat. Yet the publication of many tremendously important research projects is condemned to death simply because people apparently cannot be expected to understand that small runs cost more per book, and that quite often it may be necessary to include part of the cost of research in the price of the book.

#### C. Publishers tend to feel larger markets are better markets

A friend of mine, referring to the burgeoning success of a new publishing house said, "They don't publish less than 25,000 copies of a book anymore." Whether he was right or not, this is no definition of success. Any publisher who is so "successful" as never to publish less than 25,000 copies of a book has merely decided to ignore the needs of all groups smaller than 25,000.

We may certainly admit that a publisher is doing a worthwhile thing if he improves his marketing efficiency to the place where a book that might otherwise only sell 5,000 copies would be able to sell to a larger number of people. This, however, is a truth which obscures the thesis of the minipublisher: any group of people, no matter how small, whose fulfillment as human beings will be enhanced by the availability of certain materials in book form, constitutes what is a legitimate, honorable, and perhaps even highly strategic group to serve.

Indeed it may be quite preposterous to assume that a small group is less important to serve than a larger group. Some of the most important documents that have ever been prepared in history have been a single page prepared for the eyes of a single person. (Take for example Einstein's letter to Roosevelt about the feasibility of the atom bomb.) Somehow we readily agree that a memorandum with six carbon copies circulated to various people can be ultra important, and that a new book circulated to 20,000 people is likely "a most worthy production." But apparently many people think that all communications to groups larger than six or smaller than x thousand deserve no place in the sun. Yet this is the portion of the media spectrum to which minipublishing is devoted, not by accident, but by choice.

#### D. Publishers do not just turn down bad books

Let us not suppose that this lower band of the spectrum has been simply overlooked. There are problems. For discussion let us grant that there is no intrinsic defect about a book no more than 1,000 people will buy. However, if a book, in order to be accepted by a conventional publisher, has to sell 10,000 copies (or 5,000, or even 3,000), but the publisher's best estimate is that it cannot sell more than 1,000, two things tend to happen. The publisher, for at least economic reasons, turns it down. The author, for at least psychological reasons, feels he has himself been turned down and that therefore the quality of his book has been (unfairly?) judged inadequate. The latter is a non-sequitur against which minipublishing arrays its forces.

It should be added that a publisher may also turn a book down because it doesn't fall into the pattern of interest of his particular audience. The kindest thing a publisher can do is to turn a book down that would make only a moderately successful sale under his own label but would sell much more widely and to the right people in the hands of a publisher whose audience is more inclined to the author's subject matter. This points out the value of a literary agent. Publishers are no more alike than the shops on a street. You would not be surprised if a jeweler was uninterested in adding bananas to his inventory, or a shoe store, bicycles, no matter how high the quality of the bananas and bicycles.

### E. Guessing at demand introduces irretrievable inefficiency

Even where a book exactly meets a publisher's current clientele, only the omniscient publisher can guess correctly how many books may safely be printed. If a publisher goes 100 books over or falls 100 books short of the demand, it costs him about as much either way. (Telling a lot of people you don't have a book may cost as much or more as having that many books left over.)

This problem is all the more serious in the mini-market range. Have you ever wondered why a best seller may go through twenty or thirty printings? Is it really true that after the first fifteen printings of 20,000 copies each the publisher really couldn't believe that more than another 20,000 could be needed? More likely, a long series of printings results from the fact that the amount saved by printing 40,000 rather than 20,000 may be outweighed by the cost of storage and the interest on funds invested in advance of sale. If there comes a time with a best seller that the demand drops off sharply the publisher never wastes more than, say, half a printing.

But while a book of wide interest can economically be published in printings as low as 3,000 to 5,000 and still maintain a conventional price structure, the mini-market may start out with 1,000 copies and require additional hundreds, which simply cannot feasibly be printed. This is one reason why a second edition price in minipublishing sometimes may have to be higher than the first.

Having to guess in advance at the expected demand thus introduces inefficiency for a book with a large market, but introduces problems of utmost gravity when conventional printing is used for smaller markets.

### F. Creeping quality had added to prices

The more we have gotten accustomed to books sold in large quantities, the more we have been led to expect for all books a certain kind of quality in those areas of fixed cost: editing procedures, cover design, typography, etc. For example, with a book of 200 pages, eventually selling 100,000 copies, the cost per copy need allow only 1.6¢ for extra typesetting costs of \$8.00 per page. But with a book published in 1,000 copies, an extra \$8.00 for typesetting per page requires \$1.60 per book to cover it (which means somewhere between \$2.50 and \$5.00 more in the retail price).

Obviously the mere fact that we are accustomed to books produced in large quantities prepares us for indignation at any kind of format or editing or proofreading deficiency detectable in a low-run book. That is, we expect for small-run books those kinds of quality which can be feasibly purchased for only large-run books. Minipublishing has to brave this kind of uninformed indignation.

### G. Two-year production cycles limit the usefulness of a book

Lengthy (two or three year) processes of publication, damage some books, totally bar others. A real estate agent is willing to pay quite a bit of money for a 200 page book of new listings for his area because it comes out every week. Such books could not possibly be sold if they took two years to produce. Most standard publishers have developed over the years such a lengthy, lock-step series of processes that they cannot even think about taking books in whose data is readily perishable, or fairly quickly outmoded.

This fact simply prevents the conventionally published book from being a vital tool in any fast moving or fast developing discussion in everyday life. Yet it only takes a

week to print a book, and the printing cost per page is lower than mimeographing when you get more than 300 copies done. In many cases the preparatory papers for a conference could more economically be printed than mimeographed in advance. But this is not common knowledge. People assume a printed book must be typeset. Also seldom realized is the fact that the increasing discrepancy between the pace of life and the pace of publishers has drastically curtailed the traditional function of books as the primary documents which libraries consider permanent acquisitions. The biology library at the California Institute of Technology throws out all books after two years on the assumption that book-length documents are compilations of mainly previously printed facts; they take so long to be published that they are probably outdated when they first appear and are certainly outdated after another two years. What does the library retain? They retain all the back issues of over 800 journals in the field of biology. Research scholars in technical fields have little use for books except as summaries and compendiums. Robert Funk <sup>5/</sup> confesses that "my growing independence [of books] owes more to abstracts (for perusing the journals) and the copying machine. Preprints, abstracts, and copies of relevant documents are the working materials on my desk."

#### H. Publisher's contracts give price control entirely to the publisher

This may seem reasonable since the publisher is generally putting up the capital. But where a publisher seriously underestimates the audience for a book, he may put the price up disastrously to defend himself against a small distribution, in which case his prophesy is self-fulfilling--the high price does indeed guarantee a small circulation. In the religious field there may be a dearth of truly wise literary agents who could in some cases arrange conferences between authors and publishers, and by the author shouldering some of the risk, avoid the process whereby a publisher may tend to put the price too high rather than too low. There are books which would sell considerably more copies at a smaller price, but the publisher alone does not wish to shoulder the risk. In some cases the publisher ought to spend a lot more time discussing the potential market with the author. The more technical the field the less likely the publisher is warranted in assuming a posture of marketing omniscience. But custom marketing will be discussed below.

## II. SPECIFIC ELEMENTS IN MINIPUBLISHING

The fundamental distinctive about minipublishing is the relatively smaller scope of publication. Some of the fixed costs in conventional printing are so high that the matter of quantity exercises a tyrannical force. Suppose, for example, that it costs \$400 for very minimal editing and preparation of "camera-ready copy" for a book of 250 pages. An additional \$500 is necessary actually to print one copy of this book. This means that for one copy the total cost is \$900. But two copies will cost \$900.50--only 50¢ more. Three copies will then be \$901.00; ten copies \$904.50. Thus the difference between the cost of one and the cost of one of ten copies is over \$800. That is, printing ten copies brings the price down from \$900 per copy to \$90.45 per copy. But comparing the difference in cost of one of a 1,000 copies and one of 2,000 copies the price drops only 26¢ per copy. Meanwhile case binding rather than paper binding adds about 50¢ to the cost of the book--an amount not much affected either by the size of the book or the number printed. The addition of a multi-colored dust jacket can add \$10 per book to a small run, but may only add 15¢ per book to a large run. Or an extra \$400 spent in editing and/or manuscript preparation can obviously add enormously to a small run though it can be almost irrelevant in a large run. Yet printing quality and paper quality make a significant difference in the price of the large-run book.

Curiously, as between fixed costs and run-on (or variable) costs that get larger with the size of run, there is almost a complete switch in importance between mass books and mini

books. The fixed costs don't much bother the mass book; that is, editing, typesetting, proofreading are not critical because the mass run whittles them down to almost nothing per book. But if a drug store paperback were to use decent paper, it might double its production cost and thus its retail price, while the use of high quality paper in a mini book will be a relatively small part of its production cost. Briefly, mass books can splurge on one-time costs like expensive cover designs. Mini books must drastically reconsider all the fixed costs subject to reduction, but achieve very little by economizing on paper and binding quality. In minipublishing, therefore, two lines of attack must be carefully explored.

#### A. Custom marketing: trying to reach the maximum real market

Nothing is accomplished by selling or even giving a book to a person who isn't going to read it. Something is definitely lost if there are people who need and want the book and cannot acquire a copy of it. Thus, with one eye glued on the critical factor of quantity, we must make sure that all the right people get the book and that we do not in the process sell it to the wrong people.

Lest anyone suppose that getting documents to the wrong people is only a hypothetical objection, consider what happens when a large learned society publishes a journal. The internal diversity of the society may be such that perhaps only one-fifth of the material in any one issue is of value to any one member. Thus the money a member pays toward his personal copy of the society's journal (usually obligatory with membership) brings him back a bulk of material meeting his "expected-price-per-page" thinking, but only does so by the artificial inflation of the market. What he is really doing is paying 10¢ per page or more for what he really wants, but is forced to get a lot of other things free which he doesn't want. This inherent wastefulness is built into the very structure of a journal in the case of a large and internally diverse society, and it is this phenomenon which is prompting the development of some new approaches that will be mentioned under section III.

However, there may be better ways to circulate a document than to camouflage its true expense in the artificiality of an overly diverse journal. The most important function to be performed in minipublishing is to exploit every creative approach to the reaching of the maximum real market. In some cases this is pitifully simple even though beyond the normal considerations of some publishers. Almost every subcommunity of interest among mankind already has some routine inter-communication. Custom marketing will carry its news by riding piggy back. 6/ Scholarly publishing depends a great deal upon reviews in those technical journals that are a typical routine communication within specific subcommunities. The forthcoming journal of the International Association for Mission Studies and proposed journal of the American Society of Missiology in process of organization will greatly increase the number of reviews in the field of Missiology. Reviews in a diverse journal may easily be missed. It may actually be more efficient for publishers to buy space in a journal where this is allowed.

If artificiality is to be avoided, how is the real market to be reached? In dealing with smaller markets, it is often necessary to tailor a marketing plan specifically for each book. The clearest example of this is where a technical study is done summing up Christian mission activities in a fairly small area of the world. The primary market for such a book is easily reached due to the "small world" of mission workers in that area including the executives of their organizations in a sending foreign country. Usually there is some "inter-mission" publication which can carry the news of a new document. The people in that field and their immediate superiors elsewhere are the primary market of the book. A much larger secondary market will also exist. Note that this market is less important to the author and to the special message of the book, yet

being larger it has a greater effect upon the economic feasibility of the printing of the book. We speak of the people back home who have been supporting the mission work over a period of time. These "people back home" if the mission field is, say, India, may nowadays be in some other part of India itself. They may be highly literate, English-speaking members of the city congregations in Manila. They may be in Korea, in the U.S., in Norway, or elsewhere. These people constitute a ready audience if they are genuinely interested in the publication and will profit from it even though their interest is secondary to the purpose of the book.

How does one reach the secondary market? Since missionaries and inter-church workers maintain relatively close ties with thousands of people back in their sending countries, it is necessary only to persuade these people to add a leaflet to their existing communications. This is where the author himself, or the organization for which he works, may be in a better position to perform a role in the marketing process than is the publisher.

Searching out the real market is so basic that the structure of the whole world of publishing is to some extent a reflection of the existence of specialized markets. The so-called technical-book publishers specialize in certain areas of medicine, science, business, art, etc., and there are corresponding book clubs in all these special areas. Even local bookstores often take on a special cast due to the pattern of selection which their books in stock represent. Books in Print lists more than one quarter of a million different titles, of which even the very best stocked bookstore will hardly carry one-fifth, and average bookstores a tiny fraction. The whole world of buying that goes on via direct mail advertising has a similar, specialized structure. Once a person buys a book, or even a magazine, representing a distinguishable special field of interest, he can be sure that the publishing industry will detect his move by some method, and he will presently get additional advertisements along the same lines. The American University Press Services, Inc. has enlisted its member presses in just such a vast system of detection, and they sell lists of names and addresses at \$30 per thousand, comprising those who have bought books in a recent period of time in a list of 44 specific technical fields. Many technical books are thus sold almost exclusively by direct mail and on a highly sophisticated basis which consists basically of sniffing out real markets. In general, it is probably much easier to search out the potential market when that market is small and specialized than if a mass book of more general nature and broader attractiveness is being considered. Certainly the general bookstore must be considered a minor part of the solution for the minipublisher.

B. Functional production: Avoiding for the minibook the fixed costs of the mass book

Once the maximum real market is evaluated and it is seen that the expected circulation clearly falls in the mini range, the application of conventional procedures involving fixed costs must be analyzed unconventionally if the book is to attain to any kind of conventional price. This assumes, for example, that it may be easier to part ways with the customer's format expectations than with his price-per-page expectations! One would hope so. But there are also fixed costs that do not affect the format. Editing, for example.

1. Reducing the costs of manuscript selection and editing 7/

While there is no substitute for someone other than an author participating in the decision to print a book, there may be publishing rituals at this point which can be readily short-circuited in order to save both time and money. A mini book has the advantage precisely of not being a maxi event about which a decision is so

crucial. Certainly if a manuscript has been written by someone well beyond his student years (who has seen a great deal of the real world) and has been written from the start as a book rather than as a thesis, 8/ and has been done under the supervision of experts in the particular field, then such a manuscript need not be delayed long in the evaluation of its basic worth. In minipublishing, worth and economic feasibility must be carefully isolated.

As for the editing of a manuscript, minipublishing rightly understood inevitably simplifies this task to the point where in many cases "author editing" may be quite sufficient. Editors, like other professionals, can almost always make out a case for the customer's need of their services, and indeed skillful editors can do wonders for books. It seems clear, however, that the expense of such wonders must be re-evaluated in the case of the economics of the mini market. Furthermore, a mini book may be highly specialized. We are long past the period of history when it was possible for an editor, or even a team of editors, to be omniscient. Why not let the readership judge the author rather than the publisher, who may protect his image by ~~frankly, but discretely~~ presenting the book as author-edited? ~~Rather than edit the author's book for him, it may be more feasible as well as much more economical to give him some trenchant advice on editing.~~ Not all, but much that an editor does can be done by the author himself, if the author knows no one else is going to do it. The publisher of a mass book decides whether the book is good enough to bother editing it. The minipublisher may also wait to decide whether the author has done a good enough job of editing.

## 2. Reducing the costs of composition

One can easily understand the economy of the straight right-hand margin in the days when parchment was so expensive that whole books were simply erased in order to avoid buying parchment for another book considered more important. And for mass books today, the extra cost of composition involved in maintaining a straight right-hand margin may actually be less than the cost of the paper saved by using the maximum available space for every line. But what is logical for the mass book is quite illogical for the mini book. Indeed, people who are experts in the relationship of format to readability declare more readable the unjustified right-hand margin, which reduces the splitting of words and allows the eye movements a jagged edge from which to work. A mini book may cost twice as much, or more, if the extra investment in made in a justified margin.

The advent of the modern typewriter, especially the IBM Selectric, which readily allows several different type faces, may quite reasonably be considered good enough for minipublishing as a means of composing "camera-ready" copy. This, of course, assumes the use of lithoprinting, which is rapidly taking over a great deal of what letterpresses were once thought necessary to do.

## 3. Reducing the costs of printing and binding

There are vast differences in the prices quoted by printers, and the vast differences in quality may be completely unrelated to price. In terms of what has been said earlier in this paper, the minipublisher needs to make a study of printing costs if only to avoid the temptation to try to save money by sacrificing quality. Unlike the mass book, the mini book's cheapest luxuries are the costs that go higher with larger runs, since it is the fixed costs that can comprise 90% of the production investment. This means that additional quality in paper and in binding will be a small part of the production cost. Even the difference between a so-

dis-  
creetly





called "perfect bound" and a "Smyth sewn" binding may be neglected in many cases.

Where the minipublisher can save a great deal, however, is in the cost of cover art work, especially if it involves a variety of colors. It is quite possible to print a simple, amateur drawing directly on a cloth binding rather than to employ a more costly design and dust jacket.

A final caution about printing concerns the widely held supposition that the minipublishing of books can be handled by the instant printer down the street who will print 100 copies of something for \$3.00 while you wait. Some suppose that the existence of an available Multigraph 1250 machine can be of great service. These machines have their role in minipublishing, but not necessarily in the production of books. According to the chart for books in the table further below, when you get above 100 copies, you are already in the realm where a commercial book manufacturer may do the best job. The reason is because his press prints 64 pages on a single sheet of paper. This sheet is then automatically split in two and folded into two 32-page signatures, thereby arranging in proper sequence 32 pages at a time. This process is so much more efficient than the collation of a number of small sheets of paper coming off a Multigraph 1250 that there is no use trying to beat the commercial printer's prices in such cases. With smaller documents the converse is the case, and since minipublishing must try to deal with small documents as well as small markets, this aspect of the subject will be touched upon in the next section.

### III. THE ULTIMATE IN MINIPUBLISHING--DEMAND PRODUCTION, THE SNOWBALL DOCUMENT, AND THE TELECONFERENCE

#### A. Demand production

Returning for a moment to the type of custom designed marketing system described above: it may actually be possible to get advance orders for a book from a large percentage of the potential market before the book is printed. This approach is a time-honored method called "subscription" publishing. You simply print the copies demanded by advance orders. The same mechanism is involved when book clubs wait until a cut-off date before completing their printing of a book they have offered to their membership. These are two existing examples of "demand production." One reason demand production is not more widely used as yet is due simply to the nature of the printing press. It may seem as natural as breathing that the price per copy does down as the volume goes up. Using present printing equipment, this axiom is true, and the whole world of publishing is shaped accordingly. But if printing equipment is available in which short runs are as economical as long runs, then the publishing world would be curiously altered, and minipublishing especially would be benefited. You may ask what kind of machine can print one copy of 1,000 originals for the same price as it can print 1,000 copies of one original? An automatic-feed Xerox machine (despite what seems to be true in retail price structure). The cassette duplicating process is somewhat similar. 10/

#### 1. Examples of demand publishing

Let's take the cassette for a moment. One of its most important features for minipublishing is not its audio aspect, but its reproducibility. Compared to the printing press, cassette duplication involves virtually the same unit cost in making 1,000 copies as in making ten. And while an hour's worth of spoken words, if transcribed, edited, composed, and printed will cost only a fraction of the cost of a cassette-copy, the latter can be ready immediately, can be reproduced on de-

mand without a single copy left over, and the process leap-frogs over the inevitable initial minimum costs of \$30.00 for transcription and other fixed expenses (depending on the method) which are involved in the duplication of the printed page. This is why a minipublisher can readily "publish" literally hundreds of cassette titles with almost zero investment and risk.

Cassettes, however, have serious disadvantages. (The writer, for one, has never yet found time to listen to a single cassette.) You can't page through and underline, for example. Random access and reference back is impossible. However, despite these drastic shortcomings the burgeoning development of the cassette derives in great part (where this fact is knowingly exploited) from its adaptability to demand production. Back now to printed documents.

Herbert S. Bailey, Jr., 11/ director of the Princeton University Press, offers a careful analysis of the future of demand production of printed materials. He calls this "single-copy-edition publishing" (while Robert Funk calls it "demand publishing." 12/ He believes there is no reason to suppose that technology will very soon make conventional printing obsolete for large editions of things like Bibles and textbooks, nor for grappling effectively with the possible overnight demand for millions of copies of a book that becomes a public sensation. But he does suggest that most books will eventually be produced on demand. His insight that is most important to minipublishing is his observation that along with demand production many books will emerge that would not otherwise be publishable.

At the August, 1971 Council on the Study of Religion Conference on Scholarly Publishing an alternative format for journals was:

the notion of publishing articles essentially as separates.

Primary motivation for such a format would be to publish a far greater number of articles than can be included in the typical issue as presently bound, and to enable the individual subscriber in effect to assemble his own journal according to his research interests. 13/

This proposal is similar to the American Psychological Association's new Journal Supplement Abstract Service. By means of a quarterly catalogue of abstracts, the JSAS alerts APA members to the existence of a whole range of new documents from which members can order what they wish. This is in a trial period and has many interesting features, but the key point is that of demand production which allows specific documents to become as widely or narrowly distributed as the real market demands. This will allow far more documents to be made known, e.g. to be published. The intrinsic saving lies in the fact that not all the articles will be published in equal quantities. This in turn implies the use of other than conventional printing processes or the costs would be prohibitive.

## 2. The mechanical aspect of demand production

The matter of equipment is all important. The advent of lithography allowed Bruce Metzger to type his own book, Lexical Aids, and have his homemade sheets photo offset. In this way sixty thousand copies have been sold over a period of twenty-five years as the author kept ahead of the demand. The short-circuiting of typesetting allowed the many editions to go through many successive improvements and printings. Such a book, however, is just beyond the threshold of minipublishing by our definition because its demand has been more than 2,000 copies per year. Conventional publishers refused the book in the early days because 1) they would not have typed the copy, and 2) they were less sure of the market than the author--

who was willing to risk a first 1,500 copy edition. Now well established, the 1970 edition is beautifully typeset at the Oxford University Press (although still published by the author at \$2.25). Note that this little book would never have been published had standard typesetting been necessary in the first edition.

In other words, the advent of photo offset printing awaited alert people to figure out the unprecedented possibility of getting certain otherwise doomed books into print by means of eliminating costly typesetting. This was at least a half step toward the process ideal for demand production--namely, a process that does not vary with the quantity of identical copies. Smaller documents (than 64 pages) and smaller runs (than say 400 copies) cannot be handled by regular book printers nor even booklet printers. At this point we are at almost a mini-mini level, and all kinds of new problems emerge. Post office regulations favor items that have 34 or more pages, for example. No use saving printing costs by bigger pages if you lose more in higher postage. Handling is another factor that at this low level looms large: the Occasional Bulletin must charge more (perhaps more than it does) for a single issue than it needs to charge for those issues that are paid for in advance and mailed out automatically. In the mini-mini realm everything seems to conspire against highly specialized communication--postal laws, designers of machinery, the nature of individualized response, etc. 14/

Other unknowns, aesthetic and psychological, also emerge in this mini-mini range. Is xerographic reproduction good enough to be chosen purely on technical grounds? Is a stapled document with two pages on each face of an 8-1/2 x 11 sheet (and two more on the back) acceptable to cultured Christians who are used to handling "beautiful" materials? Does desired knowledge lose its glow if it is not at least packaged between tastefully designed, plastic-coated paper covers? Is it not folly to enter this jungle of factors with merely a slide rule?

### 3. What production process is best?

The following table is appended in order to allow at least some of the measurables to be pinned down. Each column tells the single-copy cost for an edition of a certain size, and it is easy to run down the column and see which process (the

COST OF ONE COPY OF A 250-PAGE BOOK--if 1, 10, 100 etc. are produced 15/

	1	10	100	500	2,000	5,000	10,000	20,000
Process #1	\$2800.40	\$280.40	\$28.40	\$6.00	\$1.80	\$ .96	\$ .68	\$ .54
#2	1500.40	150.40	15.40	3.40	1.15	.70	.55	.48
#3	900.40	90.40	9.40	2.20	.80	.58	.49	.45
#4	500.40	50.40	5.40	1.65	.71	.53	.45	.43
#5	36.90	5.40	2.25	1.97	1.92	1.91	1.90	1.90
#6	7.50	7.50	7.50	7.50	7.50	7.50	7.50	7.50

COST OF ONE COPY OF A 10-PAGE (8-1/2x11) DOCUMENT, stapled, in envelope 15/

	1	10	100	500	2,000	5,000	10,000	20,000
Process #5	\$1.30	\$ .26	\$ .17	\$ .16	\$ .15	\$ .15	\$ .15	\$ .15
#6	.40	.40	.40	.40	.40	.40	.40	.40
#7	1.15	1.15	.90	.80	.80	.70	.70	.70

rows) will produce the lowest cost per copy. These costs, remember, are production costs, and to not provide for royalty payments, advertising budgets, jobbers

and bookstore discounts, etc. For books handled by conventional publishers through bookstores, it is necessary to multiply these figures by four or five to estimate retail prices. In that case only the costs within the loop on the right will produce an under-\$5.00 book. If a "short discount" scale were adopted, it is conceivable that the figures in the middle loop would allow an under-\$6.00 book. The middle loop is clearly in the minipublishing range. 16/ The loop on the left, with a direct-mail price structure, would still provide an acceptable price for many documents and many purposes. 17/

The second table deals with documents so small that book manufacturing processes are not in the picture. These three processes assume author donated editing and composition. The figures are only symbolic since many human factors enter and there are alternative ways of carrying out this type of thing.

### B. The snowball document

As publishing takes its rightful place as a facilitator of larger conversation within the human community, it is clear that documents must gather around issues rather than vice versa. The journal of tomorrow may be more effectively catalytic than at present. Some journals merely publish a potpourri of miscellaneous items, tossing out something each time, if possible, to keep the diverse sectors of the readership from cancelling subscriptions. Other journals, notably Interpretation, and International Review of Mission, try to center on a single subject in each issue. Such practices indeed gather thought on a subject leaving the reader to inter-relate the distinct offerings. Current Anthropology goes further in presenting a second stage of interaction between the principals themselves.

Better still: why could not various scholar-leaders such as David Stowe, for example, be asked to kick off a certain subject in one issue and allow certain readers to respond by subscribing to follow-through discussion on the subject by other outstanding scholars with Stowe's rejoinders? Those registering their interest would receive a special supplement every so often following out the precise issue introduced. Eight or ten mini-documents would thus record an on-going conversation between Stowe and a small group selected to dialogue with him, plus other interjections by readers whose comments he felt worth including. Five or six cycles of statement and response would be possible in a single year. The final collection of mini-documents would be a much more vital and comprehensive treatment of a given subject than is possible under present conditions. A final edition would produce a "snowball document" that could then be published in one binding for a larger audience. Depending upon the scope of the participation, there would be no need for any typesetting at all. A number of trenchant dialogues could be going on simultaneously, each with its major figure and eventual snowball collection published.

At present a provocative idea has no easy way of getting around. One may suppose that arbitrary mechanical limitations deriving from the characteristics of printing equipment must have something to do with this. How often have we written an article and been greeted by thunderous silence? The minipublishing mechanism is lacking.

### C. The tele-conference

*(or computer conferencing)*

At least one commercial agency has proven the feasibility of setting up phone conferences around special fields of interest. As many as ten people who are specialists in a certain field can phone in to a New York office at a given time each week for seven weeks and find themselves in conversation with each other. Apparently rewarding conversations are possible without visual contact. This system is very expensive, and

the seven-week period is too rigid. The usual conference rate is even more expensive, all calls being billed person-to-person.

By another system it is possible for a pre-arranged conference to take place on week-ends at direct-dial rates. Outstanding thinkers in a given area could be organized to phone a specific number at a given time and their 1/2 hour or one hour discussion could be taped and sent out the same day on a cassette not only to the members of the group but to a larger group. A week later the participants have reviewed the first discussion, done further thinking, and become ready for another half hour together. Now the C-60 cassette resulting could be advertised widely. The total cost could in many cases be amortized by the wider sale of cassettes, and a royalty arrangement made contingent upon additional income. Briefly, the costs for eight people phoning from different parts of the U.S. (direct dialing) for two half-hour periods would be \$120, including cassettes for participants. This is less than the one-way air fare for one person from Los Angeles to Chicago.

Due to the demand production aspect of cassette duplication, literally hundreds of such consultations could be banked for distribution on demand without any of the investment usually associated with publishing.

#### SUMMARY

The publishing industry will not automatically relate itself to the keenest, most urgent kinds of inter-communication that lie below 2,000 copies. Why? Because many special problems arise, and because the established pattern of book trade publishing is not geared for this. At some point those who seek to communicate with each other must be willing to wrestle with the medium, not just the message.

#### NOTES

- 1/ Bailey (1970:62) unfortunately pre-empts the use of the phrase micro-publishing by which he means the "considerations that are involved in decisions about an individual book." (He uses macro-publishing to refer to matters concerning the operation of a whole publishing house.) Ray L. Hart (1971:7) uses micropublishing to refer to the use of microfilm, microfiche, etc.
- 2/ Funk, 1971:10-22.
- 3/ Anderson, 1971:129.
- 4/ Even the Zondervan retail price of \$22.95 is well below 1¢ per page. The \$10 price mentioned is that of a book club which requires an annual membership fee of \$1.00 and charges 30¢ per volume for postage and shipping (\$10 + \$1 + 3 x .30 = \$13.10 total). You may write the Church Growth Book Club, 533 Hermosa St., South Pasadena, Calif. 91030 for further particulars.
- 5/ Funk, 1971:13.
- 6/ Funk (1971:20, 21) paints some intriguing possibilities were the learned society itself to shoulder responsibilities now carried by publishers or not at all.
- 7/ Author-editing is widely discussed and recommended. See Jones, 1970:351 and Mansbridge, 1971:224 as well as the various participants in the Symposium on the "Rising Cost of Editing," 1970:348, 350, 351, 352, 355.

- 8/ On the differences between the thesis and the book and the publishability of the former see Armstrong, 1972:101, Funk, 1971:16, Hart, 1971:2,3, and especially the classical article by Halpenny (1972:111-116) now in a newly revised form.
- 9/ In addition to the Mansbridge reference cited above, see Bowen, 1969:56, 57 and Designers' Symposium 1969:82, 83, 86.
- 10/ Let us take a look in advance at the second table further below. Note that process #6 (xerox) is the only one that holds steady across the whole spectrum of quantities. Process #7 (cassette duplication) is the next least varying in cost.
- 11/ Bailey, 1970:184-186.
- 12/ Funk, 1971:13.
- 13/ Hart, 1971:8.
- 14/ Word comes of some kind of vast educational bank operated by the federal government that allows images, essentially, to be stored and printed out on demand on an automated basis. A smaller, non-governmental version of this is plainly feasible for matters of mission concern. Such things are talked about. They remain to be done.
- 15/ The seven processes selected represent only a few of very many possible combinations, as follows:  
 Process #1 = Professional editing, linotype composition, cover: professional art-3 colors-plastic coated, book manufacturer.  
 Process #2 = Simple editing, justified cold type, cover: amateur art-1 color + black-plastic coated, book manufacturer.  
 Process #3 = Author edited, selectric composition, cover: amateur art-black-uncoated, book manufacturer.  
 Process #4 = Author edited, author composition, author cover art-black-uncoated, book manufacturer.  
 Process #5 = Author edited, author composition, cover: amateur art-black-uncoated, electrostatic paper plate lithography.  
 Process #6 = Xerography.  
 Process #7 = Cassette duplication.
- 16/ This loop omits the \$1.97 amount (in the 500 copy volume) because the \$2.20 process (#3) is vastly superior to the #5 process.
- 17/ In the main, minipublished books will not flow through bookstores. Someone ordering a book without the privilege of looking it over in a bookstore ought to be able to avoid the portion of the retail price that is earmarked for the bookstore. This is why William Carey Library books, although priced for bookstores, are sold mainly through the Church Growth Book Club, at 40% below the retail price.

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#### EDITOR'S NOTE

The author of this paper, Dr. Ralph D. Winter, is the pioneer in minipublishing in the field of world mission. He established the William Carey Library in 1969 to deal with the problem of the reproduction and distribution of mission documents which trade and denominational publishers would not publish because of either small size or small potential market. As publishers became less and less willing to consider mission books for a dwindling market, the Carey Library became the vehicle for the issuance of even very substantial books. In 1970 the Church Growth Book Club was created to assist in distribution. The William Carey Library list at present comprises thirty-four published books, while the Book Club handles an additional seventy-five produced by other publishers.

Dr. Winter is associate professor in the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary at Pasadena, California; and from 1956 through 1971 he was a missionary of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. serving in Guatemala, excepting for the last few years on assignment in this country. He is well known as an authority on extension training for the ministry and as author, among other titles, of Theological Education by Extension.