

MediaAria CDM Ltd - The *Interactive* Book Publishing Company.



# MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF THE DIGITAL ERA

A COMPREHENSIVE POLICY REVIEW



*MediaAria CDM*

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The buzzword for this policy paper is change.

Since MediaAria CDM first began trading as a publishing house in 2010, the publishing industry has undergone a significant amount of change in a relatively short period of time. With the much talked-of merger of the major publishing houses, Penguin and Random House (with perhaps many such more mergers to come), it is clear that the major publishing houses are positioning themselves to meet this challenge of change by means of sheer size and bulk. As a Small Press Publisher (albeit with an innovative vision of its own for a new type of publishing model), we also have to meet this challenge, as an increasingly digitally dominated publishing world casts its long shadow over more traditional book publishers, not however with bulk and size, but with precision and carefully thought-out finesse.

As a publishing house, we are principally based in the United Kingdom. In the United Kingdom (UK), sales of traditional books in 2012 reached a three year high. This growth in traditional book sales was highlighted by the week leading up to Christmas 2012, which saw the strongest week of traditional book sales in revenue terms (£75.4m) for the UK book trade since the week ending 19 December 2009 (£75.7m, Source: Bookseller.com). This growth was reinforced by the Nielsen Bookscan's General Retail Market panel of booksellers (which offers a good evaluation of high street bookshop performance) which reported sales growing 52% week on week to £49.6m in 2012 (Source: Bookseller.com). For a publishing house that has long championed traditional books, and which forms a central pillar of our

publishing house's mission to promote the traditional book through e-retail channels, we believe that even with the event of the eBook there still exists a very substantial place for the traditional book. However, in a report published by industry body IMRG and analyst Capgemini, there can be no doubt that tablet devices are fuelling online sales growth, as figures released show that a total of £78bn (\$121bn) was spent online in 2012 (Source: Cityam.com, January 18 2013). It is this development in technology that this comprehensive policy review paper seeks to address as MediaAria CDM resolves to meet the challenge of the digital age head on.

Since the very beginning of our inception in 2010, we have prided ourselves on being innovative in how traditional books are promoted in the digital age. Being innovative however, is not only about being a step ahead of particular trends in the fast moving, technological world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but also about being open to examining new ways of doing things in the publishing marketplace. No two issues have arguably illustrated these tensions within the publishing industry more than the emergence of the twin technologies of Print-On-Demand (POD) and eBooks.

Although we know the technology of POD is viewed with scepticism by the major publishing houses, from the very beginning, MediaAria CDM has always believed in championing the 'New Publishing Model' of POD technology, utilising this new technology to assist us in our publishing house's core mission to publish new, undiscovered talent in book publishing. In a commercial world where sales are made increasingly online

rather than via high street stores, using POD is not simply a matter of choice, but that it made sense. POD enables us to print traditional books as they are ordered, rather than in huge volumes and storing unsold copies in a warehouse in the hope of being purchased, which is the 'Old Model' of publishing that the major publishing houses are largely based upon. As a book publishing company based upon the 'New Model' of POD, MediaAria CDM have sought to lead the vanguard of a new direction of thinking, in order to shatter the many misconceptions surrounding both the viability of traditional books and the technology of POD in the digital age, by utilising not only multimedia outlets to promote traditional books, but also seeking to pioneer how, as a publishing house, we can actively interact with our readership base using New Media technologies.

On the matter of eBooks, as a relatively new publishing house (the event of which signalled the publishing world's entry into the new epoch of the Digital Age of Print), our policy with the arrival of this new form of how books were read and purchased was, strictly speaking, largely that of 'wait and see'. Back in 2010, eBooks, although generating quite a buzz, had still to make major inroads with the book-buying public. Nevertheless, we were wary of how many within the industry were already prophesying doom for the traditional book, no doubt not envisioning how the humble traditional print book could possibly stand against the seemingly onward advance of the technological revolution that the eBook represented sweeping through the publishing world. However, as a Small Press publishing house, we opted to take a different approach. Although acknowledging the rise of the eBook,

we also believe in the primacy of the printed word and, with the emergence of the eBook, we saw a golden opportunity for the traditional book to evolve in the new digital marketplace of online bookselling. We further expanded on this 'Third Way' in our previous policy paper entitled *A New Policy on eBooks*, where we also seriously considered what eBooks meant to us as a publisher primarily established to publish and promote traditional books. Duly, and after a period of deliberation, we came to the conclusion that the eBook format could be utilised as a promotional tool for promoting traditional books by making our titles available for download sampling online viewing. This policy would have remained, were it not for the recent event of the Tablet device. It is the Tablet we believe and assert, more so than the Kindle, that has brought about a whole new experience of enjoying books, as book reading and purchase is now a wholly and truly multimedia experience, and more fitting for a society increasingly becoming that which is tablet device-driven and consumer-led.

As a publishing house, MediaAria CDM is in a prime position to meet the challenge of this new digital age of print. This is because our core business model as a publisher is based wholly on the new technology of POD to publish our books rather than the old model of publishing. Though much misunderstood, the event of POD publishing is as revolutionary as the rise of eBooks, as POD merely utilise digital technology to print books to order to meet demand, thereby eliminating the need to stock and hold an inventory of books yet to be sold and thus making possible a limitless inventory that is environmentally friendly.

To explain further, during the heyday of the 'old model' publishers up to the 1990s, where books were readily available in only one format in bookshops and the internet was in its infancy, the emergence of the POD method of publishing books for and direct to the book-buying consumer, without needing to visit a high street bookstore, may have seemed to many to be a little bothersome. However, with the growth of the power of the internet in the interceding years from the 1990s to the present day and the ability of the book-buying consumer to purchase books via online booksellers channels and digital downloads, the knock-on effect of this has seen the closure of famous high street bookstores, including Borders. Yet, this should not come as a surprise to those who have been paying attention to the way society was heading, as the convenience of being able to purchase a book from the comfort of one's home or on the move via a smart-phone or Tablet leads to the inevitable conclusion that the digital world will have an distinct advantage over high street bookstores. Indeed, according to figures from the Booksellers Association (BA), indie booksellers fell from 1,159 to 1,094 in 2011, with the Chief Executive of BA, Tim Godfray, chiefly cited competition from the internet and eBooks for "putting pressures on high street and campus bookshops never before experienced." (Source: Guardian, June 19<sup>th</sup> 2012). And we believe at MediaAria CDM that Godfray is not wrong. According to new data from Experian, there are only 1,878 high street bookshops left in Britain, *down* from a figure of 4,000 in 2005, with 400 bookshops being closed during the course of 2012 alone (Source: The Telegraph, December 26<sup>th</sup> 2012). As a publishing house that utilises POD as

its core publishing technology model therefore, it has enabled us to more readily reach this new breed of 'mobile consumer', as the new twin technologies of Tablets and smart-phones naturally lend themselves to the increasingly online method of how books are purchased – whether a traditional print book or eBook. Yet, convenience of purchase should never be confused with a particular book format's lack of availability in the future. This is because traditional books, although we believe, will still be available for purchase from bookstores, we also believe that they will increasingly only be from specialist high street booksellers, specifically tailored to survive the digital age and their customers' love of and preference for the traditional book. It should also be pointed out that the steady decline of bookstores from the high street does not necessarily mean the elimination of traditional books from the book-buying marketplace, as illustrated by a report published by Scholastic Inc's 'Kids and Family' where more than half (58%) of those surveyed between the age of 9-17 said they would still want to read traditional printed books, even if eBooks were available (Source: Bookseller.com, January 16<sup>th</sup> 2013). Taking the findings of this report into account therefore, we would argue that what the publishing world is presently experiencing is not a revolutionary event, but an evolutionary event in how books – particularly traditional books – are marketed and purchased; i.e. by means of online booksellers rather than via high street bookstores.

In short, let there be no doubt that the book publishing industry is going through an unprecedented period of evolutionary upheaval, set in motion by the power of the internet that has finally come of age, and spearheaded by

the technological innovation of hand-held devices of not only the Kindle, but also – and more significantly – by the event of the Tablet device, that has given the modern book-buying consumer more choice, in not only the format they wish to read a book, but also in how they choose to purchase the books they want to read. This, and the fact that the book-buyer via their Tablets can check their email, watch movies and shows online via sites such as *Netflix*, as well as use social media sites such as *Facebook* and *Twitter*, makes it necessary that for bookstores to survive in this new epoch of mobile entertainment, it is becoming increasingly more essential for booksellers (particularly indie high street bookstores) to partner with small press publishers to reach this new and varied market more than ever. With the emergence of Tablets, it is this technological event, more than any other, that has convinced us to make our titles fully available in eBook format for charge – but with a difference.

It is at this juncture that we should say that although we passionately reinforce our commitment to promote traditional books as a publisher, we also believe that it is only by building a viable readership base, in the long term creative interest of the authors signed to our list, that true and successful growth can be achieved. Therefore, whilst the ‘Old Model’ of publishing made in-person promotions (e.g. book signings, book launches, book receptions, etc) sufficient, in the digital age of publishing, online promotional techniques are, we would argue, far more effective in allowing new and emerging authors to reach far more readers, not only in the host country where the author is based, but in other countries worldwide. As a

publishing house founded on the 'New Model' of POD publishing and championing traditional books through primarily online promotional channels, it is this emphasis that increasingly drives our goal to be *the interactive* publishing house of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as opposed to more traditional publishers founded on the 'Old Model' of 'bricks & mortar' publishing, which, we believe, runs a very real and serious risk of terminal decline on the high street – at least in the western world. This is why (not excluding certain traditional promotions to be undertaken at our strict discretion) we greatly encourage authors signed to our list – in close partnership with us as their publisher – to be highly proactive in online promotions (e.g. *Goodreads, Facebook, Twitter* etc.) as we will, during the course of 2013 and onwards, be moving away from traditional marketing methods to more precisely targeted electronic, multimedia, social and mobile-based marketing. This is because we strongly believe that the days when an author can merely write a book and do the bare minimum of online and pro-active promotion in the hope of securing long-term success, are well and truly at an end. Now, in the digital age of publishing, an author who truly wishes to garner long-term success as a writer has to be a 'hybrid author'; i.e. a writer who is pro-active in promotional terms and, by working closely in conjunction with their publisher (particularly small press publishers such as ourselves), will fight for every opportunity to get the message out about their work and spread the word. It is these 'hybrid authors' that, as a publisher, we will increasingly be interested in publishing. To this end, and to further cement the potential growth of an author's readership base utilising the above advocated and aforementioned

promotional techniques and methods, starting with the release of the debut novel by Craig MacLachlan, *Summer's Shadow*, *Book One of the Sierra Winters & The Void* Young Adult series in Spring 2014, the following schedule of publication will be adopted as policy:

- 1). The release of the title in traditional book (Hardcover) format – 1<sup>st</sup> edition.
- 2). The release of the title (Second Edition) in eBook format – 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (approx 6 months later).

The eBook versions for *Lament Hill* and the forthcoming *Burn* by Danae Samson, as well as *Upload To Murder* by Andy Davie will be published retrospectively and at a future time to be announced. All other titles will be published in eBook format at our sole discretion, depending on the technological infrastructure of the host country of the author where a book is principally released and from where, therefore, the majority of sales for that work can be expected. In addition to new changes to be implemented in our desire to operate a more efficient and slimmed-down publishing house to meet the challenges of the digital age, the **Project: Dark Matter** line of the MediaAria CDM imprint will, from 2014, be re-launched as a traditional print book line only. For further changes that we are to implement in accordance with our new vision to meet the challenge of the digital age, please visit our FAQs.

In closing, with the adoption of this the above new policies concerning traditional books and eBooks, we believe that these policies are both fair to our authors and reflective of our publishing house's continuing mission and ethos to not only embrace but, as much as we can, lead the change in the digital age among small press publishers to the advantage of new and emerging authors. At the same time, MediaAria CDM will be positioned as a publishing house that seeks to re-assert the value of traditional books in marriage with the eBook and break new ground for small press publishing in the 21st century and beyond. Because, in the final analysis, we assert that it is not merely a question any longer of traditional books versus eBooks that should be debated, but the goal of making accessible to the book-buying audience quality creative material of a good story well told by good writers who deserve to be published. To this end, it is our vision to be the world's first truly interactive publishing house for the 21st century, where, at MediaAria CDM, we are motivated by one simple principle: if we believe in the writer's work and believe it will bring something new to the art of storytelling and publishing in general, we shall commit to publishing that work and making it available to a worldwide audience.

We hope to achieve this goal with our readers, authors and followers who share this vision with us. I hope you will journey with us, MediaAria CDM, in the pursuit of this goal – both for readers and authors alike. Please like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter if you do.

Thank you for taking the time to read this comprehensive policy review document by MediaAria CDM Ltd.

*Love Storytelling! Love Books!*

*Spread The Word!*

**C D Mick is the Company Director and founder of MediaAria CDM, the book publishing company for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and author of**

**‘A Rocker’s Chorus’ and ‘Cold Tales: In The Shadow Of The Cold War’.**



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