



**NANYANG
TECHNOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY**

BOOK MAVENS OF MANILA

**BOOK MAVENS OF MANILA:
AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS
OF CONTEMPORARY NICHE PUBLISHERS IN THE
PHILIPPINES**

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2019

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I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research, is free of plagiarised materials, and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

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Authorship Attribution Statement

This thesis contains material from two papers published in the following peer-reviewed journals in which I am listed as an author.

Chapter 4 is published as Sagun, K. K., & Luyt, B. (2016). Fulfilling the Cultural without Forsaking the Commercial: University Presses in the Philippines from the Perspective of Three Directors. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, 47(3), 250-266.

The contributions of the co-authors are as follows:

- Assoc. Prof. Brendan Luyt provided guidance and edited the manuscript drafts.
- I prepared the manuscript drafts, designed the study, and performed all coding and analysis of data.

Chapter 5 is published as Sagun, K. K. A., & Luyt, B. (2018). The industry avengers: An analysis of contemporary comic book publishers in the Philippines. *Convergence*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856517751380>

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my dear husband, Julius Cesar, who managed to turn this manuscript into merely the second best thing I obtained from Singapore, thank you—for reading, re-reading, and proofreading, and most of all, for your patience and understanding. My deepest thanks also to our dear baby who only kicked and turned for a few times during my oral defense. We love you.

To my parents, Antonio and Alda, please accept my utmost gratitude for your unwavering love and support. Thank you for persevering to give me opportunities that none of my “hard work” could ever yield.

To my supervisor, Brendan Luyt—after four years of academic banter we are finally here! Using all 60,000 words of this thesis would not be enough to thank you. You have not only become a mentor, but also a dear friend.

To the professors I met here in NTU, my sincerest thanks, especially to those who encouraged me that my work does not need acclaim or appreciation, but authenticity. May your tribe increase.

To my mentors, colleagues, family, and friends in the Philippines, your prayers, messages, and help sustained me. To Hon. Lourdes T. David, my deepest thanks for pushing me to do my PhD. To the countless Filipino librarians who helped and supported me in this endeavor, I dedicate this thesis to you.

To my friends in Singapore, especially those who have become like family, thank you for welcoming me here. I appreciate your tireless efforts in making my heart (and my belly) full. Special mention to Yanwah Leung for perpetually helping me care for my intellectual baby.

And to my Lord, my Savior, my Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who I lost sight of in the midst of thesis writing, thank You for finding me.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis documents and analyzes the experiences of niche publishers in the Philippines. Chapter One elaborates on my objectives and the structure of the thesis. Chapter Two provides a general overview of book history, while Chapter Three offers literature on the Philippine book trade. Chapter Four presents my qualitative, phenomenological method. Chapter Five, the first study, focuses on university publishers. It was through this study that I found that roles in Darnton's circuit are not mutually exclusive. Chapter Six, the second study, examines the Philippine book trade from the perspective of comics publishers. Findings reinforce the overlapping roles in the circuit, while adding another actor (distributor). Chapter Seven, the third study, probes the experiences of self-publishers. Here I found that not all authors are created equal—some are able to self-publish both in print and electronically, some just online, while some are still controlled by a traditional publisher. The fourth and final study, Chapter Eight, investigates children's publishers. My findings demonstrate that Darnton's claim that the external forces influencing the life cycle of the book comprise a single entity is flawed. The last chapter, Chapter Nine, provides a summary of my work and its contributions, a discussion on its limitations, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a paradox. It discusses book history, but in light of recency. It examines the book in this particular context, but veers its attention away from the object itself, and instead focuses on human beings.

As Filipino book historian Patricia May Jurilla (2008) notes, book historians themselves consider the field as quite the misnomer. The history of the book includes, but is not limited to the book in history. It in fact encompasses political and societal issues of the present, and even the future. The role of the book in today's society has immense research potential, and this dictum is true not just in the Philippines, but also in Southeast Asia and the wider non-Western world. Here in my work I also contend that not much attention is given to those involved in the life and death (and rebirth, in some occasions) of a book. *Book Mavens of Manila* explores how books come into being and how they are used by humans to achieve their varying and sometimes contrasting desired ends. As such, it can be said that this study diminishes the book as an object, but among the plethora of research that glorifies the materiality of the book and undermines the role of human agency in its formation, a study taking on such perspective is long overdue. In helping me take on this challenge, the 1982 essay by librarian and book historian Robert Darnton proved to be quite useful. He introduced eight key individuals responsible for the existence and circulation of the book: the author, the publisher, the printer, the supplier (to the printer), the shipper, the bookseller, the reader, and the binder (to the reader). For my research, I used Darnton as my point of departure, yet towards the end of my first study I realized that the

reality that Darnton attempted to capture shifted and changed, depending on one's point of view. This finding is unique and important, as I have considerably explained in the succeeding chapters of this thesis. In my conclusion, I have also discussed how my findings tested a seminal model, contributing in the analysis of a subject of interest (Bates, 2005), alongside a contextual examination of the phenomenon.

I also acknowledge that the Philippine book trade does not exist in a vacuum. For this reason, my work investigates it alongside the influences of foreign ideas not only of the present, but also the past. In Chapter Two, I offer a history of the history of the book (taking particular interest in theories and models), to orient the reader in the underpinnings of this thesis. A brief history of the colonial Philippines and a discussion of the current book trade landscape are presented in Chapter Three, in order that the reader would have a basic understanding of the country's past, and the industry's present situation. I however postpone the assumption that the Philippines is only the sum of the parts of its previous colonial masters. My study rather follows the post-colonial theory of globalization processes led by Arjun Appadurai (1996) and James Clifford (1997), veering away from the "traditional" pointing of fingers at colonial influences and instead turning to analyses of complex global power relationships—and such is the reason why I also offer a general overview of the book trade industry in the same section. I do not, however, discount the colonial influences, unlike the many reductionists who only consider pre-colonial and post-colonial Philippines as what can be considered as "Filipino". As anthropologist Fernando Zialcita (2005) asserted, those in between are still authentic Filipino, although not being exotic. My work is also heavily

influenced by phenomenological methodologies, with philosophical groundings, which contend that experiences were best explained by those who lived them. More details are provided for this in the fourth chapter, Method.

What does the contemporary book trade landscape look like, from the perspective of niche publishers in the Philippines? How do they operate with the current state of the industry wherein both print and digital materials are in existence? This thesis answers these questions using a two-pronged approach. First, through a historical, contextual documentation, and second, through an analysis of the narratives alongside Darnton (1982).

Unlike most book historians who chase paper trails left by those who have passed on, I went after the narratives of the living. I grappled with contemporary issues and gathered novel knowledge for theory and practice. I did so for various reasons—first, in order that scholars interested in the book would be granted a departure from the by and large Western focus of those conducting research in the area; second, that Darnton’s 1982 model may be contextualized in a contemporary, developing society (being originally based on the historical, developed West), and lastly, so that more readers will be provoked to think more critically of the book. The individuals studied in this thesis portray a specific angle on the current state of book trade in the Philippines, and highlight perspectives on an industry where both print and digital materials coexist.

It would have been ideal to study every group involved in the Philippine book trade—from the creative (or sometimes merely fortunate) author to the elusive smuggler to the different and changing faces of the reader. Sadly, such is neither pragmatic nor feasible for a doctoral thesis. As I focus on creation and

dissemination, I settled for a main character in Darnton's circuit largely involved in such activities—the publisher. After all, some contend that a book only becomes a book after it is published and released in the market—however arguable and somehow elitist this belief may be. And while the term “publisher”, has been used interchangeably to suggest a person conducting publishing activities or a publishing house itself, in this thesis I use it to refer to the former. This is because in some occasions, the individuals (publishers) do not necessarily equate to the entire institution, as in the case of the university publishers studied here. It also seems that Darnton and I are in agreement in this aspect, as players in his 18th century circuit denoted individuals, and not corporations.

I conducted four studies (presented in Chapters Five to Eight) on the following types of publishers in the Philippines: university (academic), comics, self-, and children's. This selection was guided primarily by their “niche-ness,” particularly veering away from what was already covered by Filipino book historians who came before me (Jurilla, 2008; Totanes, 2012), and secondarily, access, as the Philippine book trade proved to be a difficult industry to penetrate. And while some might have been appalled by the apparent Manila-centrism of my study, the fact is most activities in the industry happened in the capital (Totanes, 2012). Also, although I acknowledge the importance of documenting the movements of those outside Manila, in light of pragmatism I leave this for other researchers to take on. A thesis done is much better than an ideal one not done, after all.

Succeeding this introduction is a review of pertinent literature—as mentioned, comprised of a general overview of book history, Philippine history,

and Philippine book trade. This is followed by a description of my research method, followed by a presentation of results from the fifth to eighth chapters. The ninth and final chapter presents a brief summary and conclusion.

Before I end this section, I must stress that readers must treat this piece of work as a collection of cases immersed in their context instead of a generalized account of the book trade industry. Only then can one understand and appreciate its true value.

CHAPTER TWO THEORIES AND HUMAN BEINGS

A Brief History of Book History

Finkelstein and McCleery (2005) argued that the field of book history is rooted in bibliography, literary studies, and economic and social history. In their chapter, *Theorizing the History of the Book*, they lucidly pieced together theories and themes in these areas in the past century. Guided by their work, these shall be the primary subjects of the succeeding paragraphs. Interestingly, book historian Leslie Howsam (2008) claimed that book history itself has yet to profit from an in-depth historiography of its own. This perhaps stemmed from the desire of book historians for comprehensiveness. Scholars from this field were apparently gifted with, first, the compulsion to study numerous aspects of the book (as physical artifacts, as fine art, unique production methods, or unique cultural symbols), and second, a great amount of books and book collections waiting to be examined (Finkelstein & McCleery, 2005). In this chapter, I attempt to contribute to this aim for breadth, by underscoring an aspect of the life cycle of the book that was initially demonized, eventually recognized, and unfortunately sidelined—the role of human agency.

It was pronounced that book history originated at the onset of the twentieth century, when scholars examining early printed texts found interest in their production (Finkelstein & McCleery, 2005). Finkelstein and McCleery (2005) further recorded that questions on how to distinguish printed authentic and corrupted versions of Shakespeare's plays initiated methodologies on examining the materiality of textual production, rendering books and texts as physical objects, and recognizing which versions of the text fall under what is

rendered as good and what is considered as bad. Much of the focus was on bibliography at that time. The authors related how “reconstructing texts (and printing practices that led to their printed creation) was the defining aspect of ‘descriptive’ or ‘analytical’ bibliography as practiced by such bibliographers and textual critics” under what was to be the “New Bibliography” (p. 8). At that time, they also became aware of the intervention of agents apart from the author. However, the earlier book historians rendered their roles as merely “part of that corrupting process” (p.8). Agents such as editors and proofreaders were examined in order to “distinguish their interference and establish the text that most accurately reflected the author’s final intention” (p.9). This reflects not only an author-centric point of view back then, but also a perspective that renders the actions of other agents as lessening of the virtue of the book.

This point of view was auspiciously debated by academic Don McKenzie in the 1960s. Finkelstein and McCleery (2005) noted that McKenzie’s (1969) controversial (but highly original) essay, *Printers of the Mind*, “challenged the orthodox views of analytical bibliographers who had dominated textual bibliography throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s by demonstrating that the physical production of a text was very much dependent upon the conditions in which it was produced” (p.9). In other words, activities conducted after the author penned the text are part of the history of the book. McKenzie’s legacy, as pointed out by Finkelstein and McCleery (2005), is his emphasis on broadening the analysis of textual meaning beyond literary criticism, bibliography, history, and other competing fields. Book history, for him, should look at what these fields often overlook: meanings beyond “the

text”, the sociological context of text production, and how books and texts are distributed and consumed by the market.

McKenzie proposed that scholars move beyond the interpretation of texts solely as the product of an author’s intentions, or even solely through quantitative, macro-historical examinations of book publishing and printing trends, towards a study of texts as mediated products within which one could find traces of economic, social, aesthetic, and literary meaning (Finkelstein & McCleery, 2005, pp. 10-11).

The Social Life of Books

This “movement” from texts to the sociology of texts was picked up by librarian and book historian Robert Darnton. In his work in 1982, Darnton developed the notion of the book trade as a circuit, that external forces which influenced the industry were specified in scholarly literature. Despite the existence of earlier studies on the book in society by Febvre and Martin (1958), who highlighted the impact of the book in the social context of Western Europe during 1450-1800, McLuhan (1962) who studied the effect of the printing press on European culture in his seminal work *Gutenberg Galaxy*, and Eisenstein (1979) who focused on the printing revolution during the fifteenth century West, it was the novelty of recognizing these external influences that rendered Darnton’s (1982) oft-referenced *Communications Circuit* revolutionary. His motivation for proposing such a model stemmed from a desire to address what he saw as the disconnectedness of work on the subject area which “looks less like a field than a tropical rain forest” (1982, p.66)—the result of its interdisciplinary nature. This circuit, according to him, served as a “general model for analyzing the way books come into being and spread through society” (1982, p. 67). Darnton (1982) did, however, pose a modest caveat that conditions were of course relative, but that books in general pass through the

same cycle. Darnton (1982) went over each player in the field and demonstrated how they contributed to the circuit. Tracing the social history of the book, he began with the author, then the publisher, followed by the printer—which had direct relations with the supplier, and then the shipper, the bookseller, and ending with the reader, completing the circuit.

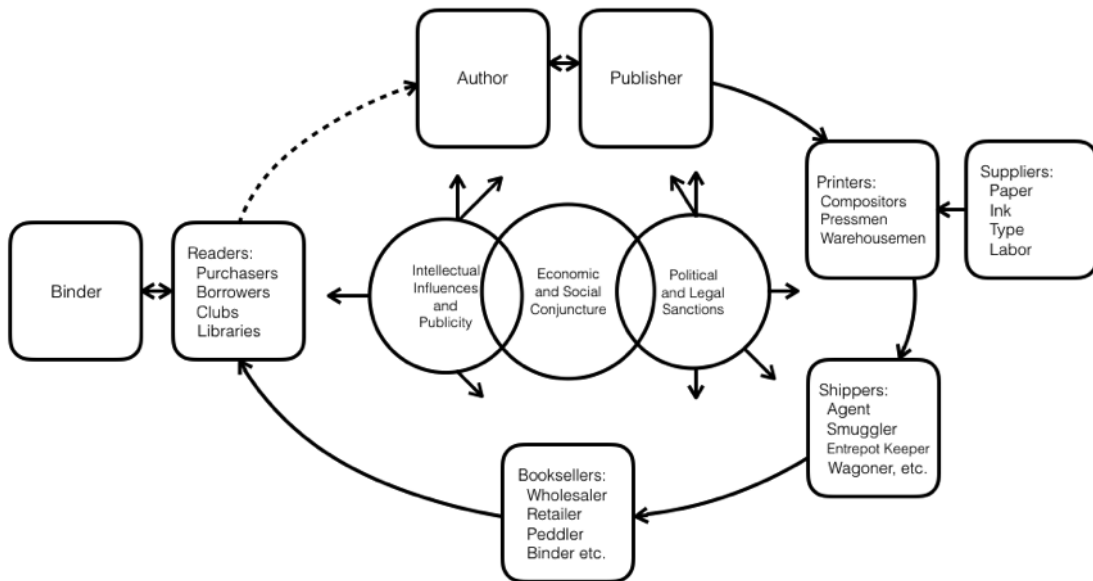


Figure 1. The Communications Circuit. Adapted from “What is the history of books?” by Darnton, R., 1982, *Daedalus*, p. 68.

Darnton’s (1982) model is circular, suggesting a continuous cycle. A dotted line from the reader to the author was put in place to signify the influence of the former to the latter before and after the act of composition, and to show that the realm of readers fade into authors—as authors are, according to Darnton (1982), readers themselves. Interestingly, he illustrated binders as interacting with the reader (and vice versa, hence the double arrowed line), demonstrating that in the 18th century it was common for readers to purchase loose pages and do their own binding—in order that the books in their personal

libraries would match aesthetically. Darnton (1982) also attributed to the author and the publisher a two-way relationship as one sought the other. It is clear that he placed primacy on the human players involved in the production, circulation, and consumption of the book, more so as he further stressed that understanding the relations between individuals in the circuit was important to understanding the sociology of books. Thick descriptions of the roles of players during the 18th century are also a significant aspect of his work.

As for the three general categories of external influences in the circuit, Darnton (1982) named them as: (1) intellectual influences and publicity, (2) economic and social conjuncture, and (3) political and legal sanctions. Despite having separate segments, according to him overlaps existed, and the separation of the three was for illustrative purposes only. In addition to the difficulty of delineating which belonged where, Darnton's (1982) own use of his model reflected an application of a combination of all three influences on each of the players in the circuit. Through this aspect of his model, Darnton (1982) provided a detailed background to the social structure embedded in and revolving around the printed book. The study of such structure, Darnton (1982) warned, was not an easy feat, and most have chosen to take on specific parts of the circuit in their work. However, he also contended that it is crucial to study the parts in relation to the entirety of the circuit in order to have a holistic view of the book as an avenue for communication, and thus prevent book history from "being fragmented into esoteric specializations" (1982, p.67).

The Communications Circuit, in spite of receiving much acclaim in studies of the history of the book since its conception, was criticized a decade later by book historians Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker (1993). Their

point of contention was in Darnton’s people-centric (instead of product-centric) take on book history, regarding this factor as the weakness of his model. They proposed a new model for the study of the book, which was, interestingly, also based on the historical West—18th century English maritime books, to be exact.

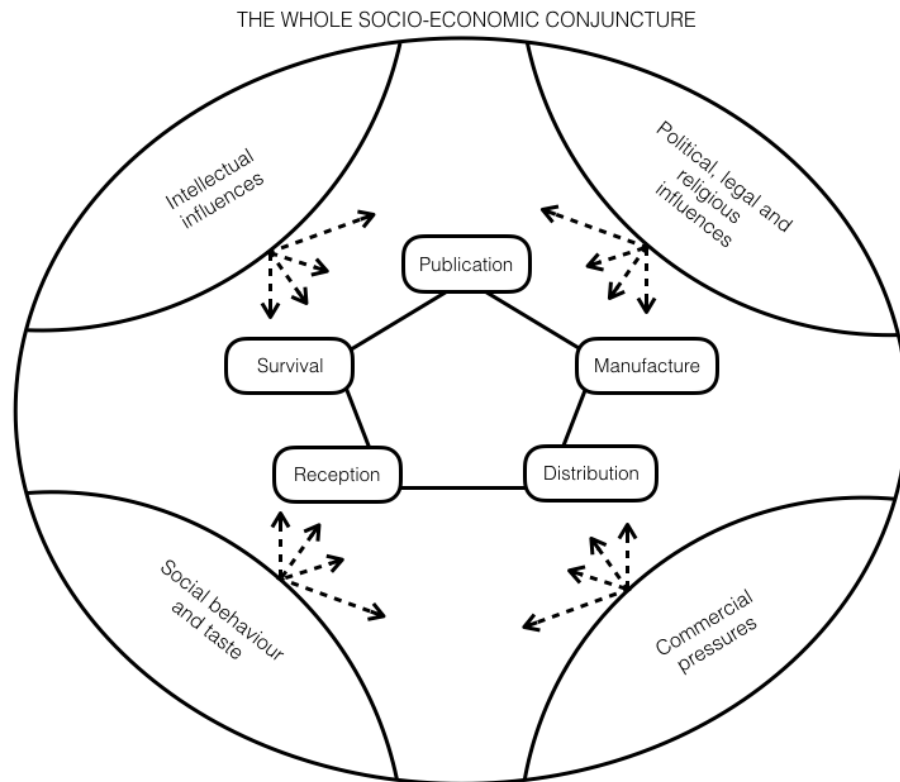


Figure 2. A New Model for the Study of the Book. Adapted from “A New Model for the Study of the Book” by Adams, T. R. & Barker, N., 1993, A Potencie of Life: Books in Society, p.14. London: British Library.

For Adams and Barker, the book takes center stage—as “the indirect forces are seen outside it, looking and pressing inwards” (p.15). In lieu of the players Darnton (1982) mentioned, Adams and Barker chose to frame their model within what they called the five events in the life of a book—publishing, manufacturing, distribution, reception, and survival. Compared to Darnton’s core of overlapping circles (intellectual influences, economic and social

conjuncture, political and legal sanctions), Adams and Barker posited four separate zones, with the addition of commercial pressures being unique to their model. These zones then influenced at least two of the stages at a given time, which according to them is on a case-by-case basis. In spite of Adams and Barker's product-centric model, it is notable that the role of human agency was still given much emphasis in their study. They stressed that in writing book history, it is of prime importance to take labor into account—the element which they rendered as a key driving force. More than accounting for every step in the process, they said that, “how these operations were brought into harmony and co-ordinated to produce a physical object—the book—is a further dimension” (p.22). One must, according to them, find out how each group went about their operations—analyzing them separately, and then collectively as a member of the larger society they belong to, reminiscent of Darnton's appeal to those who wished to use his model. Adams and Barker, akin to Darnton, also opined that studying the human element in the manufacturing of the book is imperative, yet remains unexplored.

Much like Darnton, Adams and Barker also depicted the entire process as context-specific, making comprehension of how a particular context operated a prerequisite to understanding the entirety of the circuit. Again, taking after Darnton, Adams and Barker allowed for alterations to their suggested model. While placing the book on center stage, they also posed a fair warning: that “the book will shift from its central position as other forms of communication grow in importance” (p.39). What they failed to mention, however, was that while the book may change, it is not the product itself that is responsible for its own adaptation to its environment. In other words, books cannot change themselves

for their survival, but people in the industry can either change the book for theirs, or perform some evolutionary self-transformation to keep themselves relevant.

In 2007, Darnton revisited his account on the history of books and proposed three main questions that book historians ought to answer: (1) how do books come into being, (2) how do they reach readers, and (3) what do readers make of them. By posing product-centric questions, it can be surmised that Darnton struggled to address the criticisms of Adams and Barker towards his earlier essay. However, in true Darnton fashion, he still took on a rather humanist approach. He contended that examining the activities of people is important in understanding the history of books (without failing to mention how Adams and Barker downplayed the role of certain human elements). He also added more detailed descriptions of certain human players in publishing from his exploration of the letters from the archives of prominent Swiss publisher the Société typographique de Neuchâtel (STN), namely: smugglers, *commis voyageurs* (traveling agents of publishers), literary agents, pirates, publishing alliances which formed agreements to swap books, wholesalers (publishers who evolved into clusters of allied houses), while mentioning a few political obstacles.

Darnton ended his later work by recognizing that some fields in book history “defy the urge to draw diagrams” (p. 504). Using the case of Iceland, he narrated that the country had neither bookshops nor schools from the sixteenth up to the mid-nineteenth century, yet records revealed that by the turn of the eighteenth century, its population was almost entirely literate, as families in farms taught reading (mostly of religious works and Nordic sagas) in the

home. This is a good example, according to Darnton, of a society that negated everything he indicated in his 1982 model. And whether the case of Iceland is an aberration or not, two things can be surmised from this phenomenon: first, that human actions have the ability to alter the ebb and flow of the circuit—in this particular case, that of books and other reading materials, and second, this being considered, that models are not solid, fixed and immutable. These suggest that the application of models (or the need for one, even) might differ from context to context.

The influence of Darnton's original Communications Circuit spanned decades, geographical locations, various fields of study, and even the seismic shifting of the medium of the book. Aside from being relevant to works in Western book history (Bhaskar, 2013; Bishop, 2012; Castronovo, 2014; Venezky, 1991), it has also been referenced in similar historical studies conducted on the East—China (Cherniak, 1994; Brokaw & Chow, 2005; Chow, 2004), India (Ogborn, 2008), and even the Philippines (Jurilla, 2008; Totanes, 2012), to name a few. Inclusion of technological advancements was also done by van der Weel (2001)—who used Darnton's basic concepts but added and situated the Internet and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in lieu of all entities between publisher and reader. His study, however, aside from being conducted in the West, also intriguingly downplayed a significant aspect of Darnton's model—the external influences.

While many other contemporary scholars have likewise been attentive to the changing form of the book (Thompson, 2005, 2012; Hillesund, 2007; Martin & Tian, 2010; Smith, 2012; Phillips, 2014), Murray and Squires (2013) set their work apart by contextualizing the entirety of Darnton's model in the

digital age, positing that despite its persisting relevance, the model could benefit from a much-needed 21st century update. Their thesis rested in two ongoing phenomena in the book trade industry—*disruption* and *disintermediation*. New business models have emerged, and according to them this resulted in the conflation (and at times redundancy) of roles in the traditional models of publishing. Their model (which they christened as the *Digital Publishing Communications Circuit*), apart from being built on the shoulders of Darnton, was also drawn from broader industry developments and case studies of small and medium sized independent publishing companies in the United Kingdom.

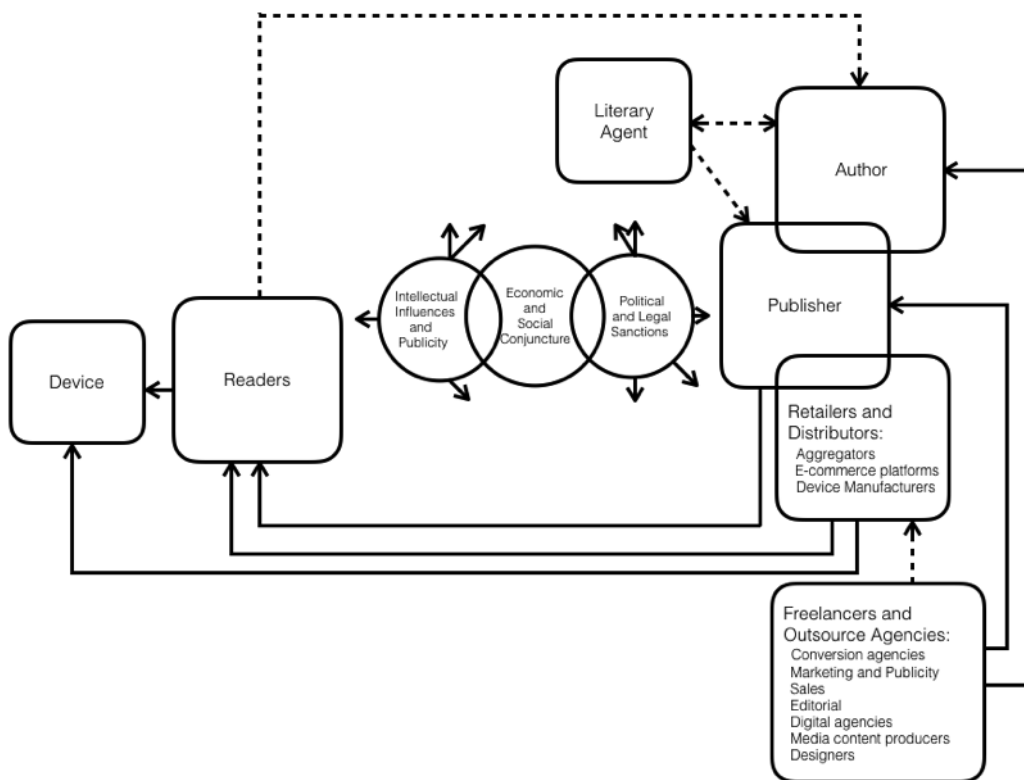


Figure 3. The Digital Publishing Communications Circuit. Adapted from “The digital publishing communications circuit” by Murray, P. R., & Squires, C., 2013, *Book 2.0*, 3(1), p.8.

External forces were imported directly from Darnton’s 1982 model. The first notable addition is the literary agent. Other post-Darnton scholars also

acknowledged this player for the historical West (Curtis, 1990; Gillies, 2007), and Murray and Squires described them analogously in the electronic environment—as a champion for authors against publishers. These alleged agent-publisher conflicts, particularly those financial in nature, served as their first example of disruption and disintermediation. Digital publishing disrupted the cycle, disagreements arose, and this threatened to disintermediate either agents or publishers. They further argued that other roles may also be disintermediated, as “[r]elationships between authors, literary agents, publishers, retailers and distributors are changing, with the roles of some being taken over by others, or dropping out of the circuit altogether” (p. 9), as indicated according to them by the boxes (roles) overlapping one another. They further stressed that forging new partnerships is hence imperative for players in the digital age.

Murray and Squires contended that Amazon is responsible for the disintermediation of booksellers. Using sophisticated algorithms, patented functions such as “Search Inside,” one-click purchases, recommendation engines, and even the benefits of economies of scale, they noted that Amazon easily trounced booksellers and even publishers in terms of competition. They further highlighted that the level of customer engagement that Amazon achieved in a short period of time remains a dream for traditional booksellers. Overall, they concluded that the “transformation of the book browsing and buying experience effectuated by online retail, coupled with the introduction of affordable and intuitive e-readers such as the Kindle, are key disruptive forces in book publishing” (p. 13). Apart from proximity to buyers, Amazon further exploited their extensive library of customer information in making

“personalized” recommendations to further boost sales.

Murray and Squires also added freelancers and outsource agencies to their model. In wanting to be leaner and more cost-efficient, publishers chose to employ non-permanent workers to perform copyediting, conversion, marketing, design, among others. As some roles of publishers and that of retailers and distributors are overlapping, the same is true for the latter. Such outsourcing practices, according to Murray and Squires’ observations, was indicative of the evolving role of publishers, as nowadays they not only publish, but also “provide a suite of services that can facilitate other players in the value chain, with this potentially even overtaking their primary function of publishing.” “Such diversification,” they said, “is both born of business opportunity, but also stems from an anxiety, both economic and cultural, of increasing obsolescence and irrelevance” (p. 11).

Unsurprisingly, the authors jettisoned 20th century binders and replaced them with *device*. Here the device related not only with the reader, but also with retailers and distributors. An example they used to prove this point is Amazon’s Kindle, which was intended to only read books bought from their own retail site (now also compatible with .mobi and .pdf file formats). Murray and Squires retained the dotted arrow (and the original Darnton dictum) that signified readers coalescing with (or into) authors. One stark difference this model had from Darnton’s is the direct arrows from publishers to readers, signifying the non-necessity of a middleman in passing the reading material from the hands of the former to the latter—yet another instance of disintermediation. Such phenomenon is also evident in the work of Clark and Phillips (2014), particularly when they explained that each part in the traditional chain of the

book trade is prone to disintermediation. They offered examples such as authors self-publishing hence cutting out agents and publishers, librarians acting as university publishers, agents acting as publishers, publishers going direct and doing away with wholesalers and retailers—pronouncing that a vertical business between author to reader is underway. Another thought that seems less absurd as technology progresses is that “synthetic authors might replace authors” as “an intelligent computer program might be devised that uses semantic textual analysis of competing and similar works and real-time analytics of current trends, information, interests and cultures to write books” (Clark & Phillips, 2014, p. 20).

Situating Darnton within the electronic landscape is a refreshing escape from the tunnel vision in book history that shuns the digital. However, absent from the polemics of those who have attempted to do so (including Murray and Squires) is the acknowledgement that the book trade today remains an environment where books exist both in print and digital formats (Ludovico, 2012)—and that models of the industry must at least reflect, if not represent, a co-occurrence of the two. Bearing these in mind, deeper analyses not just on the effects of disruption and disintermediation may be gathered, but also on the metamorphoses that players in the circuit are currently undergoing.

On Non-Western and Postcolonial Histories of the Book

Fraser (2008) noted that many scholars of book history share the notion that print culture was more often than not “diffused” through “colonial contact” (p.11). This perception, including what he renders as Marshall McLuhan’s “exceptionally fixed and limited cultural perspective” (p.11) in *The Gutenberg*

Galaxy, were major points of Fraser's contention. In particular, the "they", "we", and "native populations" in the following excerpt intensified his antagonism:

Since the object of the present book is to discern the origins and modes of the Gutenberg configuration of events, it will be well to consider the effects of the alphabet on *native populations* today. For such as *they* are in relation to the phonetic alphabet, so *we* once were. (McLuhan, 1962, p. 18)¹

Fraser (2008) reiterated that such points of view come from a distorted approach to culture as "comparative, evolutionary, and diffusionist" (p.12), with particular disagreement with the last item.

Benedict Anderson (1983) spoke of print capitalism in his celebrated work, *Imagined Communities*. He argued that "although printing was invented first in China, possibly 500 years before its appearance in Europe, it had no major, let alone revolutionary impact—precisely because of the absence of capitalism there" (p.44). While the lack of a major impact of printing in China is of course debatable, Reed (2004) in his book *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876-1937* also confirmed that print was a major player in the golden age of Chinese capitalism. Eisenstein herself noted that print culture in her *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* depicted only "post-Gutenberg developments in the West," and that "how printing affected pre-Gutenberg Asia must be left for others to investigate" (Eisenstein, 1979, p.9).

Today, it is obvious that the West does not have a monopoly on neither capitalism nor the history of the book. However, it cannot be discounted that the discipline was born around Gutenberg's invention, and it has since grown,

¹ Emphasis mine.

in most occasions, from that direction. And while Darnton (1982), Adams and Barker (1993) and Murray and Squires (2013) produced models in their examination of the book in the West, we find that in countries where linguistic lines are less established and colonial influences overlap with local traditions, developing a general model may be more complicated.

CHAPTER THREE THE PHILIPPINE BOOK TRADE

The Past as Prologue

In order to appreciate the Philippine book industry as it is today, it is necessary to begin with a basic understanding of the historical underpinnings that prompted the makings and movements in the local book trade. Much of the earlier work on the subject chose to focus on either a specific issue during a certain period (Aprieto, 1983; Heyneman, Jamison, & Montenegro, 1984; Hernandez, 1996) or a specific player in the circuit in a given time (Ballesteros, 1951; Aprieto, 1981; Pacheco, 1985; Reyes, 1997; Bolasco, 2000; Hidalgo, 2007). Some of these may even be straightforwardly dismissed as non-scholarly due to sources used or because of their channels of distribution (magazines, other non-peer-reviewed resources). And while Buhain (1998) attempted to provide a chronological account of the history of publishing in the Philippines, his work is not a comprehensive historical account despite presenting numerous interesting images of local publications (Jurilla, 2008).

Early Philippine book history could easily be a fine example of what Darnton referred to as a tropical rainforest. Not only are accounts all over the place, most of them are also dated. As of writing, there are only two Filipinos who refer to themselves as book historians,² Vernon Totanes, library director at the Ateneo de Manila University, and Patricia May Jurilla, a faculty member of the literature department of the University of the Philippines. Totanes did his research on *The History of the History Book* with the Faculty of Information of the University of Toronto, Canada, while Jurilla conducted her doctoral

² Both are based in the Philippines.

dissertation (later turned book), *Tagalog Bestsellers of the Twentieth Century* (2008) with the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, United Kingdom³. It was not until Jurilla's doctoral dissertation that some scholarly orderliness was achieved in Philippine book history. She has since contributed to the field in various capacities, publishing two other books in the field (apart from her dissertation). In painting my own picture of the local book industry, I referred mostly to Jurilla, supplementing her work with a variety of sources which her book, perhaps due to certain limitations, did not cover. For this purpose, the accounts of other historians among several other resources have been particularly useful. Building upon their work, I offer in this section industry milestones from the late 1500s up to the present.

While it is common knowledge that the country is heavily influenced by its colonial past (a lengthy one at that), other events in the history of book trade in the Philippines are no less important. Pre-colonial Philippines, to the surprise of the first Spaniards who reached these shores, was a highly literate society (Woods, 2006). In spite of this, the idea of books was still foreign to the locals (Jurilla, 2008) and it was the Spaniards who brought printing into the country (Herbert, 1989). Jurilla (2008) further recounted how Spain used books to gain control over the natives—and that even before Spanish colonial rule officially began in 1565, royal decrees on books were well established. For instance, an order for a special license from the Royal Council of Indies as prerequisite to any form of sale or printing of books was signed in 1556. As part of their own brand of colonialism, the Spaniards used books to propagate their religion

³ There are no PhD programs in book history or information studies in the Philippines as of writing.

(Roman Catholicism), and hence only materials relating to such were brought into their new territories, including the Philippines. On the subject of censorship, Jurilla also noted that books on profanity and fiction were forbidden entry in the country, in addition to the prohibition of printing, selling, and even carrying such items, as they were seen as “detrimental to the establishment of the authenticity and authority of the Christian faith” (p.17). “Developments” in the book trade during this period were driven by the colonizers coveting even more control. Jurilla spoke of a branch under the Holy Office of the Bishop of Manila akin to a historical Bureau of Customs, checking and confiscating books coming in from overseas that were listed in the Roman Catholic church’s *Index Liborum Prohibitum* (list of forbidden books). She also described a decree that disallowed the publication, printing, or even the use of materials in the vernacular unless they were examined and pre-approved by the bishop and the *Royal Audiencia* (colonial Supreme Court). It is therefore unsurprising that the first books of the Philippines, the *Doctrina Christiana en lengua española y tagala* and the *Hsin-k’o seng-shih Kao-mu Hsien chan Wu-chi t’ien-chu cheng-chia chen-chuan shih lu* (Jurilla, 2008) were for the purposes of religious enlightenment.

Despite being born during this era, the local book industry endured a sluggish progression during the Spanish colonial period. It was not until centuries later that a significant growth in printing in the country was experienced. As Jurilla mentioned, the establishment of private presses in Manila during the late 1830s ended the seemingly interminable monopoly held by the religious orders. Other cities in the country followed suit shortly after. In 1871, a different kind of decree, protecting the intellectual property of authors

and owners, was signed, marking the very first copyright law in the Philippines (Jurilla, 2008).

Movements for reform and the revolution were significant catalysts for the industry during the 19th century. Jurilla noted that much dissatisfaction arose from the new middle class, who wrote of the abusive Spanish government and clergy. Most notable of such works, according to her, are Philippine national hero Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* (Touch Me Not) and *El Filibusterismo* (The Filibuster), both published overseas yet by overcoming several obstacles found their way to the Philippines. Here the power of books was harnessed not just by the Spaniards, but also by Filipinos themselves. Jurilla and other historians (Francia, 2014; Schirmer & Shalom, 1987) narrated that in one way or another these books sparked the revolution against Spain—leading to the arrest and eventual execution of Rizal. These two books remain influential long after the colonial period, and became required readings in Philippine secondary schools and universities until today (as mandated by Republic Act No. 1425, otherwise known as the Rizal Law in 1956).

Spanish rule in the Philippines ended with a rather devious arrangement. The Spaniards left in 1898 after forging a turnover deal with the Americans at the cost of twenty million dollars (Jurilla, 2008). While the Spanish were very hostile to Filipinos interested in learning to speak or read their language (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005), the Americans used English to instruct (Boudreau, 2003; Silbey, 2008), or as some would say indoctrinate (Nadeau, 2008; Martin, 2008), or even miseducate (Constantino, 1970) the natives by way of their benevolent assimilation. The Americans brought in suffrage, the American-style bicameral legislature, and the Commonwealth presidency into

the Philippines (Hedman & Sidel, 2000)—a radical contrast to the stringent Spanish government. Nonetheless, Jurilla described how the Americans took a page from their predecessors, as regulations, such as the Sedition Law of 1901 (Act No. 292) which prohibited advocating Philippine independence from the United States, were put into place. Nevertheless, the American regime was the heyday of the Philippine book trade according to Jurilla—bookshops and newsstands proliferated, journalistic activities abounded, and Filipino publications were juxtaposed with their American counterparts. She also recounted that the relatively more relaxed censorship laws allowed for increased production of local publications as well as a heightened variety. It was indeed a good time for publishing in the vernacular. As Martin (2008) narrated,

Spanish declined but English had not yet gained a foothold. Thus, the floodgates of literature in the native languages were flung wide open. With a newfound freedom of expression under the American colonizers, Philippine poetry, fiction, and journalism flourished in the native languages (p. 247).

However, both Jurilla and Martin observed that the Americans still used their own textbooks in Philippine classrooms. Jurilla recounted that even though Filipino-authored textbooks were in publication in the early 1900s, imported textbooks still governed the market (so that even Filipino-authored schoolbooks were printed in the States and then imported into the Philippines). Such hegemonic endeavors were unsurprising, as the Americans did cultivate a dependent relationship for their colonies in terms of economy and trade (Hedman & Sidel, 2000), coupled with the fact that most Filipino-authored textbooks were not written in English, and were hence against the interests of

the colonizers (Martin, 2008). Nonetheless, Philippine literature both in English and the vernacular thrived during this time.

The historic progress of the industry was cut short by World War II and the Japanese Occupation (1942-1945). In what Jurilla called a “harrowing period in Philippine history” in a later work of hers (2010, p. 8), this era was certainly a bane for players in book trade. She noted that only seven titles were published in the country during the war, and harsh censorship laws imposed by the Japanese were to blame. As is usually the case, the war was unkind to printed materials. Knuth (2003) mentioned how the Japanese wiped out libraries in the country during this time. Jurilla also described how thousands of volumes (including rare books) were damaged in the bombing of the National Library. Yet, from the ashes came another renaissance in the industry. As the Japanese fled, postwar, independent Philippines proved to be good soil for the development of printed materials. As Jurilla reported, “with the rise of the new republic, journalism in the Philippines thrived as it never had before” (p. 41). Book publishing was not as lucky. She noted that the market was still heavily dependent on importation—both for materials for leisure reading as well as textbooks. Booksellers, according to her, generally operated stationery stores. She further described the book trade as a meager industry dominated by textbooks. Jurilla acknowledged that some developments did occur in the 1950s, thanks to a couple of reasons—a rising demand for more locally published and Filipino-written textbooks, the prohibition of imported elementary schoolbooks and supplementary materials by the government, and the establishment of the Philippine Educational Publishers Association (PEPA). These changes, however, are notably textbook-centric.

While lagging behind textbooks, literary materials were, at the very least, holding their own during this period. Jurilla attributed the minimal yet nonetheless existing development in literary publishing of this time to the agentic efforts of key individuals—Albert Benipayo who launched the acclaimed Philippine Contemporary Writers series in 1954 through his press and photo-engraving company, Andres Cristobal Cruz who published the literary journal *Signatures* and the Filipino Signatures book series in 1960, Albert S. Florentino, playwright turned publisher of the celebrated Peso Book series, and F. Sionil Jose, novelist turned publisher turned bookstore owner of the venerated and still operating *Solidaridad* (Solidarity), to name a few.

A setback in the industry was the proclamation of martial law by then-President Ferdinand E. Marcos in 1972. Youngblood (1981) described how Marcos initially banned all mass media activities, and then imposed strict censorship by allowing the publication and distribution only of materials that “reflected positively on the government and the military” (p.710). Jurilla further recounted that even with the resumption of publishing, the government kept a close eye on everything printed by the presses. Compliance to such laws was strictly implemented—scores of publishers were imprisoned, and even small Catholic Church publications were charged with sedition and were forced to shut down their operations (Coronel, 2001). The strongest blow to the industry, Jurilla argued, did not however come from censorship—but were brought about by the economic plagues of inflation, foreign debt, and “the constant depletion of the national treasury due to graft and corruption” (p. 47). These pestilences, according to Jurilla, affected society severely, as the gap between classes became wider than it already was, and professionals and skilled workers with

the capacity to leave fled and sought jobs overseas. She argued that such diaspora resulted in a regrettable brain drain in the country.

However, she also noted that government efforts to furthering the industry were not entirely absent. For one, steps were taken toward professionalizing the publishing industry while the Decree on the Protection of Intellectual Property (Presidential Decree No. 49) allowed copyright protection for owners even without having to register or deposit their work with the National Library. Jurilla unfortunately also reported that these attempts had negligible impact, primarily due to inefficient implementation by the government coupled with indifference and even ignorance on the part of authors and publishers. Two later decrees (Presidential Decree No. 285 in 1973 and Presidential Decree No. 1203 in 1977) signed during the Marcos administration, as Jurilla noted, did have an impact on the industry—for the most part, an undesirable one. These laws allowed for the reprinting of local and foreign books whenever their prices were deemed too steep that it became unfavorable to national interests. The 1973 Decree covered educational, scientific, and cultural materials, while the addendum of 1977 included textbooks and reference books. Granted that the laws were created with the Filipino readers in mind (as the laws did, as Jurilla explained, contribute to the increase in local book production), with them came low-quality reprints in circulation as well as an international stigma for Philippine publishers as pirates. And while Jurilla recognized that these laws did succeed in bringing down the costs of imported textbooks for university-level students, a lacuna remained to be filled in terms of textbooks for elementary and secondary levels. For this, she reported that the government did pose yet another “solution”—its

own Textbook Development Program wherein the government published its own textbooks for public schools—something which private publishers saw as a move to gain virtual monopoly of the market.

If there is one thing local private publishers were not, it was a passive bunch. Jurilla narrated how they came together in 1976 to “raise public awareness on books and to seek government support for local publishing” (p. 48) by way of their newly-established Book Development Association of the Philippines (BDAP). According to Jurilla, BDAP outlined a number of issues hounding the business of books in a paper they released in 1981 on the state of the industry in the country. These included high printing costs due to high taxes imposed on raw materials from overseas, high costs yet low quality of locally published books, stiff competition with imported titles, challenges in distribution, and most importantly, the miniscule market for books despite high literacy rates in the country—something which Jurilla saw as resulting from the lack of an established reading culture. It is however worth mentioning that it was also during this time when expensive coffee table books were in fashion—which signified, according to Jurilla, a difference in economics and sensibilities between the haves and the have nots. The visceral mass appeal of romance novels and comics in the vernacular during this time solidifies her argument. Jurilla ended her section of this era with a sad note—that in spite of the existence of fast-selling books, censorship still stifled industry growth, and that the martial law era was generally a tough time to be an author, a publisher, or a bookseller.

When Marcos was ousted in 1986 through the monumental EDSA People Power Revolution, the country was left in shambles. Nadeau (2008) wrote that

among the worst issues were poverty and the collapse of the economy, political strife, corruption, gambling, and syndication even among the police and armed forces, not to mention the development of terrorist organizations. Nevertheless, Jurilla was positive that there was “a revived sense of possibility and spirit of nationalism among Filipinos” (p.52), evocative of what transpired at the end of Spanish rule. Freedom of the press was reinstated, and with that, book publishing underwent a remarkable expansion. In spite of this, Jurilla pointed out that issues such as the small book market, production woes, distribution challenges, Manila-centrism of publishing, and the lack of government support persisted even after the martial law era—as did Marcos’ reprinting law. She further reported that serious efforts were conducted to develop the industry—most notable of which is the first Philippine Book Fair in 1989. According to her, trade book publishers such as Anvil, Bookmark, and a few other children’s book publishers enjoyed much vibrancy, post-martial law. Literary publishing also advanced thanks to the *Panitikang Pilipino* (Philippine Literature) reprint series, which was made possible through the efforts of the university presses of three top-ranking schools in the country—the Ateneo de Manila University, the De La Salle University, and the University of the Philippines (QS World University Rankings, 2015).

In 1995, thanks to the clamor of local publishers, the Book Publishing Industry Development Act (Republic Act No. 8047) was passed into law. This according to Jurilla further developed the industry through the creation of the National Book Development Board (NBDB), which monitored the book trade as well as promoted its development in the country. In 1998, the Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines (Republic Act No. 8293) repealed the

previous copyright decree signed by Marcos. The 1990s was (at least at the onset) described by Jurilla as a good time to be in the business, as bookselling expanded and progressed. However, the latter part of the decade was troubled by the Asian economic crisis, and with that the industry also incurred a few losses. According to the account of Jurilla, book production plummeted, sales were low, bookstores closed one branch after another, and authors were in effect dissuaded from writing.

The history of Philippine book trade is rich with stories of renaissance after going through major political turmoil. Yet today a different set of challenges are in the offing for the players in the field—economic challenges, stringent competition, and a government unable to properly address the literary needs of its people. It is obvious that the industry may greatly benefit from studies on how those currently in the circuit struggle to beat the aforementioned odds, reminiscent of how a number of them proactively achieved success after the Second World War. It would also be interesting to investigate if disruption and disintermediation are relevant issues in this context—as others have mentioned a penetration of e-books in the country (De Luna, 2015; Sim, Tay, Priyanto, & Hickok, 2012). Such studies remain to be conducted. In this thesis, though, I initiated an investigation of these issues in the Philippines, a context contemporary book trade literature is almost completely unfamiliar with.

The Current Landscape

It seems that the local book industry is not in any way sprinting towards what players in the field would deem ideal. Interestingly, the amount of scholarly documentation on the Philippine book trade is directly proportional to

the speed of its growth. For this reason, I rely on documents produced by concerned international and local⁴ agencies, as well as materials outside what is typically considered “scholarly” to represent the current landscape. While these may be construed as less than ideal, I found that the reports are balanced by a healthy awareness of weaknesses and points for improvement, and that individuals belonging to the field authored the articles for general consumption.

However, it must be said that even these documents leave much to be desired in terms of access and consistency, as supposed *annual* reports of the NBDB were only posted for years 2006 to 2011, and then for 2015.⁵ Interestingly, the links for years 2006 to 2011 were broken, thus only the 2015 annual report is available. While a “readership survey” is conducted every five years (2007, 2012, 2017), links to the 2007 and 2012 reports were also inoperative⁶. Snippets of data for 2017 were, however, presented in an eye-catching infographic, with some references to data from previous surveys conducted. Presentation slides by the Philippine Statistical Research and Training Institute, to which the work was commissioned, was also included.

The Philippines has the lowest number of books published in Asia relative to its population. This dictum originally came from a United Nations report in the 1960s (Cruz, 1967). Decades after, there has been some slight improvement. The country placed second to the last in Southeast Asia in 2014, beating Laos in an unfair comparison of 2014 Philippine data with the 1995 data from Laos⁷. While the country was able to publish 7,850 books for its 100

⁴ Such as the Book Development Association of the Philippines (BDAP) and the National Book Development Board of the Philippines (NBDB).

⁵ Data as of November 2018.

⁶ This has been reported to and acknowledged by the Board.

⁷ Data and analysis from the National Book Development Board.

million inhabitants, this figure seems quite paltry compared to Singapore's 9,952 books for its 5.3 million residents⁸, Malaysia's 19,171 books for a population of 28 million⁹, Vietnam's 24,589 books for 86 million people¹⁰, and Thailand's 14,000 books for its 66 million population¹¹.

In a report released by the BDAP (2015), it was found that the publishing and printing industries contributed only PhP 3.02 billion (around USD 64 million) or 0.21% to the country's GDP in 2009—a diminutive share brought about by poor industry performance during the past twenty years. Interestingly, their work also reflected inequality in terms of monetary production among the players—wholesalers and retailers contributed 76% (of the 0.21%), while the rest was shared by pre- and post-presses and printers (6%), publishers (4%), and authors, writers and translators (2%, combined). Unsurprisingly, they also found that in 2012, scales were tipped to book importation (garnering USD 61.493 million) as opposed to export endeavors (USD 2.881 million). To use their words,

Coupled with the negligible increase in the production of books as shown by the NBDB data from the National Library showing the industry's very conservative production of titles throughout the years, the lack of players registered with the NBDB, and poor distribution systems that do not provide access to the populace, the current Philippine scenario shows a need to grow a book-reading public and the imperative necessity to revitalize and rejuvenate the industry is necessary (p. 15).

To remedy this, they encouraged their co-players to participate in the global book industry, and set six goals for achieving competitiveness:

⁸ Data from 2012

⁹ Data from 2011

¹⁰ Data from 2009

¹¹ Data from 2009

- Goal 1: Develop a mindset for innovation to keep up with constant change
- Goal 2: Improve quality of its products and processes
- Goal 3: Fulfill diverse domestic demand for quality books that are reasonably priced.
- Goal 4: Instill within its creators and content processors a desire for excellence and productivity
- Goal 5: Integrate with the international community: ASEAN and beyond
- Goal 6: Achieve equitable distribution of wealth through the viability of the publishing process at every stage of the value chain, even caring for the well being of its consumers (Filipino market primarily, which is the main market) (p. 16).

They also acknowledged the arrival of e-books in the market, yet did not discuss its repercussions for the industry. It is also worth mentioning that most of the content of the report focused on publishers, with most of the authors of the document, with but a few exceptions, reflecting a long list of notable names belonging to this specific player in the circuit.

As of October 2018, there are currently 165 registered book publishers in the Philippines. As registration is easy and mandated by law, it can be assumed that most if not all publishers are included in the NBDB's comprehensive list (NBDB, 2018). Types of books published were not included in the list, but the business addresses confirms that operations are indeed concentrated in the greater Manila area (136), its neighboring towns and cities (16), and provinces in Luzon (5), although there is some activity in Visayas (4) and Mindanao (4).

The NBDB has been working on bringing more of the industry outside of Manila. In 2015, they hosted the 6th Philippine International Literary Festival in Davao City, and in the same year pushed for global presence by sending a Philippine delegation and placing an exhibit of local books at the Frankfurt Book Fair. In November of the same year, they launched *Literatour Bacolor* in Pampanga, a four series of activities targeting young writers and educating

them about book publishing. This was not the first of its kind, as in March they also held a rights trading workshop on how publishers and content creators can partner with rights buyers in the ASEAN region.

The Filipino Reader

In 2017, the NBDB commissioned the Philippine Statistical Research and Training Institute (PSRTI) to conduct a readership survey to use for developing medium and long term strategic goals and future policies and programs. A nationally representative cluster sample of 1,200 households from four geographic domains (Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao, and National Capital Region) was based on the 2010 Census of Population and Housing. For each household, one adult (18 years and above) and one child (between 6 to 17 years old) was surveyed. This allowed for two baseline data: one for “children”, and one for “adults”. Unfortunately, variables such as age and gender were excluded from the report, and thus the mean age for what was considered as “adult” or “child” is left for speculation. I also argue that reading habits of six to nine year olds differ vastly from pre-teens and teenagers, and few findings from children were included in the report, perhaps because many aspects, such as book buying behavior, may not necessarily apply to many members of this demographic. As such, I focus only on findings on the adult reader.

The survey delineated books for academic use and non-academic use, and focused solely on the latter. While it is not mentioned in the report, it is safe to assume that they wished to investigate factors influencing voluntary reading (and buying) of books, as opposed to required school materials. Around 80% of adults read books (printed, audio, and electronic), followed by newspapers

(printed and electronic) at 69.3%, and magazines (printed and electronic) with 47.7%. The numbers remained close even when segregated by income groups, as shown in the table below.

Type of Reading Material	Under Php 11,000	Php 11,000 to Php 24,999	Php 25,000 to Php 49,999	Php 50,000 to Php 99,999
Non-school book (printed, audio or e-book)	77.25%	85.92%	78.17%	77.42%
Newspaper (Printed or Digital)	68.26%	69.30%	71.83%	83.87%
Magazine (Printed or Digital)	44.16%	47.61%	63.38%	48.39%

Table 1. Adult Readership of Different Reading Materials by Income Groups. Adapted from the 2017 NBDB Readership Survey (2017).

Despite the exclusion of school books, the survey revealed that reading remains to be seen as a means to expanding one’s knowledge, with 43.83% of adults stating that they read to learn new things, and 20.26% reporting that they do so to keep up with current events. It was not stated whether they meant reading a specific material, such as books, or meant reading in general. The survey was, in many occasions, unclear on this matter.

The Bible is unsurprisingly the most popular book in the Philippines (72.25%), being a predominantly Roman Catholic country. However, it is interesting to note that picture books and storybooks for children (53%) and short stories for children (52.08%) accounted for the second and third most read genres by adults, suggesting that adults either read to children, or that the appeal of children’s books transcend age groups. Books on romance (48.17%)

trailed shortly behind. Reference books such as encyclopedias, almanacs, dictionaries, thesauri, atlases and maps came only in fourth place (47.92%) despite the same survey revealing that reading was for expanding knowledge. Perhaps, “knowledge” has evolved to a broader, less academic definition.

Most Filipinos reported reading a book at least once a week (49.2%), while some read only once a month (22.1%), or even daily (17%). They report reading around seven e-books and four printed books in a year, and owning an average of nine printed books at home. Borrowing from family and friends (37.74%) and receiving books as gifts (33.98%) were the most common acquisition methods, while buying brand new from chain bookstores (25%) and used from secondhand bookstores (12.37%) came in third and fourth place. Loaning from libraries came at only 11.19%, reflective of the developing stage of public libraries in the Philippines. Sales from independent bookstores came at only 9.5%.

The difference between the Filipino reader’s willingness to spend for foreign and local books is negligible. As seen in the table below, numbers are too close to infer that one is deemed “better” or worth more money than the other.

Amount	Foreign Books (%)	Local Books (%)
Php 99 and below (USD 1.87 and below)	34.13	35.93
Php 100 - 199 (USD 1.88 - 3.76)	34.64	36.61
Php 200 - 299 (USD 1.88 - 3.76)	16.00	13.90
Php 300 - 599 (USD 5.66 - 11.31)	10.30	9.41
Php 600 - 999 (USD 11.32- 18.80)	1.19	1.27
Php 1,000 - 2,499 (USD 18.87 - 47.16)	2.64	2.12
Php 2,500 and above (USD 47.17 and above)	1.11	0.76

Table 2. Willingness to Spend for Printed Books. Adapted from the 2017 NBDB Readership Survey (2017).

This may possibly demystify the postcolonial image carried by the Philippines, that imported goods are still rendered superior to local ones, at least for printed books. From this, it can also be surmised that there exists a purchasing ceiling for non-basic goods for Filipinos, and that perhaps foreign materials are not exactly the reason for low sales of local books. Unfortunately, data was not segregated by income groups.

While it would have been ideal to provide more data, particularly by niche, there is unfortunately not much to work with. Secondary sources were scarce, as very little attention has been given to the book trade in the Philippines, except perhaps for children's books, which I talk about in detail in Chapter 8. Primary sources were difficult to obtain, as most publishers, as a competitive business seeking profit, prefer to keep their annual reports and

business records confidential¹². Asking for such materials from informants was not an option, as at the onset of the research it was made clear to them that the goal was not to investigate sales figures or financial performance¹³, and I intend to keep it that way.

¹² This “lack of openness” for industry data was acknowledged by the NBDB in one of their reports (2015).

¹³ Which was one of the keys to gaining access.

I was drawn to Darnton's model not only for its evident seminality but also for the same reason that Adams and Barker found the need to improve it—because it focused on people. Darnton, while providing a structure, placed primacy on the role of human agency in the formation and operation of his circuit. Such a viewpoint corresponds with the social science perspective that humans possess the ability to make causal contributions to the structures they operate in (Bandura, 1989; Giddens, 1989). In addition, scholarly works on Philippine book history in the recent past have already focused on the book (Jurilla, 2008; Totanes, 2012), hence rendering the human component relatively uncharted in this context. I did, however, take into account limitations to the applicability of Darnton's work. As his model was based on the 18th century West, it is logical to assume that certain players and relationships will be, in one way or another, dissimilar to those in contemporary Southeast Asia. The variance in the models of those who came after Darnton, as presented in my literature review, can be testament to this. I resolve this issue by balancing being informed and guided by Darnton with maintaining an open mind that my data may reveal unexpected players, connections and even influences in the circuit I attempted to build to describe the Philippine book trade.

On Phenomenology and Qualitative Research

Darnton and I both wished to build our analyses from the ground up. However, one stark difference between his work and mine is that Darnton had the luxury of having his hands on the STN correspondences—and that these

correspondences were curated under one roof. I possessed no such luxury, and thus needed to resort to gathering information through other means. What I did have was access to living players in the circuit. For this reason, I chose to take a phenomenological stance in my own study as this approach oriented to the examination of lived experiences of participants (van Manen, 1997; Mapp, 2008; Finlay, 2011). Such a method is also fitting to the in-between stage of the book—not foreign yet not exclusive to the electronic format—and is suitable for discovering how the players in the circuit lived through this juncture. As Todres and Holloway (2004) put it, only those who have experienced a certain phenomenon are able to describe it to the outside world.

While nomothetic was the dominant methodological school of thought during the early twentieth century, Eagleton (1983) noted that a desire for a more appropriate approach to certain social phenomena was what prompted German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1970) to develop his own qualitative method back in the 1900s. Eagleton painted a picture of Husserl's situation located as it was towards the end of World War I. He wrote that:

The social order of European capitalism had been shaken to its roots by the carnage of the war and its turbulent aftermath. The ideologies on which that order had customarily depended, the cultural values by which it ruled, were also in deep turmoil. Science seemed to have dwindled to a sterile positivism, a myopic obsession with the categorizing of facts; philosophy appeared torn between such a positivism on the one hand, and an indefensible subjectivism on the other; forms of relativism and irrationalism were rampant, and art reflected this bewildering loss of bearings (p. 54).

Crotty (1996) further noted that Husserl was troubled by the detachment of scientific research from the foundation of human experience, and hence felt the need for rigorous science based on lived experiences (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2002). Husserl did not consent to the “belief that objects in the external

world exist independently and that the information about objects is reliable” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 4), but instead reasoned that people in fact have the capability to be certain about how things appear in their consciousness (Eagleton, 1983). The process of phenomenology was further explained by Groenewald, who argued on behalf of Husserl, that “[t]o arrive at certainty, anything outside immediate experience must be ignored, and in this way the external world is reduced to the contents of personal consciousness” and that “[r]ealities are thus treated as pure ‘phenomena’ and the only absolute data from where to begin” (p. 4), hence the name *phenomenology*. As Groenewald put it, “the aim of phenomenology is the return to the concrete” (p. 4) as evidenced by its slogan, “Back to the things themselves!” (Groenewald quoting Eagleton, 1983, p. 56; Kruger, 1988, p. 28; Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). For this, Husserl was heralded the founder of the phenomenological movement (Koch, 1995).

As is the case with many brilliant people, Husserl took on a protégé to whom he imparted the ways of his method. Martin Heidegger, also of German roots and a philosopher himself, eventually became a seminal phenomenologist in the vein of his mentor. Heidegger, however, rejected some of Husserl’s views on phenomenology, and developed his own approach grounded on hermeneutics (Annells, 1996). The Heideggerian or interpretive (i.e., hermeneutic) approach to phenomenology advocated that the researcher in fact “interprets meaning and therefore, inevitably, gives some meaning to the phenomenon” (Vagle, Hughes, & Durbin, 2009, p. 350) as opposed to a Husserlian (descriptive) phenomenologist who merely “finds meaning and then describes what he or she has found” (p. 350). One stark difference between

interpretive and descriptive phenomenology lies in the treatment of the researcher's biases. For Heidegger, the researcher's own interpretations and experiences are part of the research process, while Husserl discouraged such "biases" and thus advocated the use of bracketing (Walters, 1995).

Bracketing stemmed from Husserl's philosophical notion of *phenomenological reduction*¹⁴ (Vagle, Hughes, & Durbin, 2009) and has been widely used in phenomenological research (Vagle, Hughes, & Durbin citing Moustakas, 1994; Giorgi, 1997; van Manen, 1997b; Dahlberg, Drew, & Nyström, 2001). LeVasseur (2003) however contended that the practice of bracketing is actually constricting for hermeneutic research. During the early days of phenomenology both Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenologists bought into the idea of bracketing, but the latter group's belief that the researcher was part of the research itself led many of them to prefer bridling to bracketing (Vagle, Hughes, & Durbin, 2009). Bridling, as pioneer Dahlberg (2006) described it, is similar to the way a horseback rider tightened and slackened the reins in the manner that researchers cannot cut off their preconceptions, but they can control them. Dahlberg was heavily influenced by the work of Merleau-Ponty (1962), who advocated an intentional relationship between the researcher and the world. Such a relationship, according to Merleau-Ponty, is what connects us with the world, and hence it cannot be eradicated, only tightened or loosened. According to Dahlberg and Dahlberg (2003), bridling accomplishes not only openness but also a control of our own understanding, so that researchers would not fall into the trap of trying to

¹⁴ The suspension of preconceptions (Vagle, Hughes, & Durbin, 2009)

understand the phenomenon in haste or even carelessly, and pointlessly struggle to make definite what is actually indefinite.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

In a later paragraph I discuss my *epoché*, which covers my deep involvements in the context of this study. It would be difficult, and more so a waste, to “bracket” or discard my experiences on the subject matter to conduct a descriptive phenomenological study. It made more sense, and added more value, to go with the interpretive. More contemporary scholars engaging in Heideggerian phenomenology have also taken interest in small contexts in lieu of making claims about populations. One such method steadily gaining popularity since its inception in 1996 is Jonathan Smith’s Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which took after the Heideggerian tradition by combining phenomenology and hermeneutics, but, in light of its attentiveness to the particular, added idiography (examining individuals) to the equation.

IPA has much to offer for the study of players in the book trade industry. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) defined it as “a qualitative approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences” (p. 1), making the use of IPA a good response to the call by book historians for a deeper analyses of human agency. This method sets itself apart from other phenomenological approaches through its specific interest in the day-to-day flow of lived experience and how these activities elicit significance for human beings. Not to be confused with being concerned merely with ordinary and trivial experiences, the aforementioned authors argued that

there existed a hierarchy of experience, and that the method can in fact be applied to each of the levels. In the simplest of circumstances, they contended that we are “constantly caught up, unselfconsciously, in the everyday flow of experience” but that as soon as awareness of circumstances kicks in, we have what they called “the beginnings of what can be described as ‘an experience’ as opposed to just experience” (p. 2). The words of German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (who came before Heidegger and Husserl) as quoted by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) proved to be quite useful in further explicating the concept of experience. According to him,

Whatever presents itself as a unit in the flow of time because it has a unitary meaning, it’s the smallest unit which can be called an experience. Any more comprehensive unit which is made up of parts of a life, linked by a common meaning, is also called an experience, even when the parts are separated by interrupting events (p. 2).

To put things in the context of my study, informal conversations between publishers and authors can be an example of what may be rendered as small units of experience. However, as I sought to discover, these may also be comprehensive units of their lives, as such activities have the potential to become part of their ritual, even when portions of these experiences are separated by interrupting events, say, a second job, or perhaps even carrying out domestic responsibilities. Such segments of experiences may be spaced out in time but are still linked by a common meaning. The role of IPA, thus, is to help individuals remember these parts, make sense of the connections, and unravel a common interpretation.

IPA’s hermeneutic behavior is what Smith, Flowers, and Larkin described as the sense-making carried out by the research participant in light of his own experiences. The authors further labeled the process as a double hermeneutic, as

the researcher tries to make sense of the research participant trying to make sense of a particular experience. In effect, as access to the participant's experience will always depend on what he chooses to reveal about it, the researcher must interpret the participant's own account in order to be able to make sense of the experience—making the researcher's sense-making second-order, but more self-conscious and more systematic. Being idiographic, IPA is relatively more highly concerned with the particulars and the finer points compared to other methods. It aims to know in detail the experiences and the sense-making for a particular case. This entails long quotes in order that the narrative is heard and the context is given from the participant's own voice.

In addition, Flowers, Hart, and Marriott (1999) contended that the phenomenologicalness of IPA as a method is in its concern for the individuals' subjective narratives in lieu of objective reports. This characteristic validates IPA's suitability to the analysis of the book trade industry, more so in the Philippines where competition is tight, and the industry is tight-knit. In this context, scrutiny of objective facts and numbers such as sales figures, operational statistics, and other hard quantitative reports are not only difficult to source, doing so also rested on the edge of what is ethical. Making such data public might prove to be detrimental to the businesses of some players in the circuit—an abysmal case of research doing more harm than good.

IPA has been used in disciplines such as nursing (Stewart & Rae, 2013), psychology (Adams, Shakespeare-Finch, & Armstrong, 2014), education (Rizwan & Williams, 2015), entrepreneurship (Cope, 2011) and social work (Hood, 2015) to uncover how people in these professions operate in their respective fields. It has yet to be applied in the book trade, hence contributing

to the originality of my study, in addition to achieving my desired ends. The application of this method also yielded unique results, as experiences are given little attention in studies of the book trade, especially in Southeast Asia. Findings of this study can also benefit the weaker players in the circuit. Some players can combat disintermediation better than others—perhaps because of a greater motivation or means to do so. Nevertheless, the “weaker” ones—perhaps those with lesser business acumen, weaker voices in the circuit, the oppressed, among others—can pick up lessons from those who have emerged relatively more victorious. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) noted that another key feature of IPA is the epiphany from its interviewees. Hence, not only can players learn from other players, but also they themselves have the potential to have a learning experience from their own sense-making as they participate in this study.

Limitations of IPA

IPA is a relatively new method, with much room for growth. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) note that IPA is yet to be applied in what can be considered as a broad range of subject areas. It has much room for growth in terms of research design and data collection methods. Because it is new, IPA is yet to be expanded to other qualitative approaches. Steps for a researcher to undertake were also not as well defined as more established methods and methodologies. While these factors make research exciting and makes for potential contribution to existing knowledge, it also requires a great amount of flexibility and reflexivity from the research. In my conduct of this thesis, I found that a double hermeneutic takes a lot of patience, as interpretations (from

the researcher and even the participant) may not come at once. In many occasions, I needed to be away from the data for perspective, and this took up a lot of time.

As noted by Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, and Hendry (2011), there have been specific criticisms on IPA, particularly on its rigor and validity, a common critique of qualitative research studies (Sandelowski, 1993; Dixon-Woods, Shaw, Agarwal, & Smith, 2004; Barbour, 2008). Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) addressed these concerns by bringing the process of external audit to the fore. They stressed that the role of audit is to make sure that the outcome or the account is a credible one, not the only credible one. In the words of Pringle et al., “qualitative approaches such as IPA do not seek to find one single answer or truth, but rather a coherent and legitimate account that is attentive to the words of the participants” (2011, p. 23). Such was achieved in this study through a second pair of analytical eyes from my supervisor, who is neither from the book trade industry nor from the Philippines. This afforded my study with another researcher independently reviewing my findings, something which Armour, Rivaux and Bell (2009) found advantageous for establishing rigor in hermeneutic phenomenological studies.

Recruiting Participants and Gaining Access

The study of the book trade in the Philippines is a good choice—primarily in terms of wealth and uniqueness of data. This stems from the rich history of the trade in the Philippines despite remaining relatively unexplored. Cases from the Philippines are distinct from those of its other post-colonial neighbors, in that the country embraced the ways of the Americans more than it did those of

the Spaniards—in spite of (or perhaps, even because of) the latter’s rule being leaps and bounds lengthier than that of the former’s. Hence, my results can serve as points of comparison for those who wish to conduct similar research endeavors, particularly in the region. Conducting this study in this context is also timely, as the Philippines is in the stage of the coexistence of printed and electronic formats of the book. These motivated me to pursue gaining access, in spite of apparent challenges.

Shenton and Hayter (2004) note that the success of a researcher in gaining access is directly proportional to the nature and quality of data collected. According to them, the two major challenges are, firstly, securing entry into the organization/s considered as the “field” through a gatekeeper, and secondly, persuading the informant to contribute data, in this case, through an interview. As my research investigates the experiences of publishers, top managers who are also the primary gatekeepers to the organization, the two problems previously stated in effect became only one. Thus, for my thesis, I refer mostly to Shenton and Hayter’s (2004) tactics for gaining access to organizations, as this covered the aspect of gaining access to informants for my research as well. They proposed seven tactics, which can be summarized as: (1) the “known sponsor approach” wherein a reputable organization’s support establishes the credibility and legitimacy of the researcher, (2) phased entry, in which an initial simple questionnaire serves as an icebreaker for further, more demanding involvement from informants, (3) reciprocity, if the researcher makes the findings available to the collaborating organizations for their own use, (4) openness, such as honesty in sharing the reasons for the choice of “field” and the extent of commitment and disruption of work to the informant, (5)

demonstration of professional suitability, such as an awareness of wider professional trends and local developments, affiliation with appropriate professional associations, relevant experience, employment, and other personal interests, (6) exploitation of past links with the organizations, which may be useful should the researcher have previous engagements with the immediate organization or its local area (established contacts with current staff may also be valuable), and (7) receptiveness to suggestions, particularly from managers which may concern data collection methods and sampling of individuals within the organizations. I combined Shenton and Hayter (2004) with Peticca-Harris, deGama, and Elias' (2016) Dynamic Process Model of Gaining Access, as their model dealt particularly with cases of rejection (which I had encounters of) and options for re-strategizing. In their four-step approach, I had less difficulty with the first two (study formulation and identifying potential informants) as I was clear with my research goals, and players in the field can be identified through primary sources and from my own network. The latter two (contacting informants, and interacting with informants during data collection) posed greater challenges, and thus their suggestions were useful.

For contacting informants, they suggested finding “someone the researcher already knows”, “finding an informant ‘cold- turkey’ (a stranger)”, or “finding an informant through a go-between/ gatekeeper (an intermediary).” I found myself using all three strategies for different cases. However, access to strangers and gatekeepers were, as expected, not easy, and oftentimes re-strategizing was required. The same was true for interacting with informants during data collection, as no amount of preparation can cover every possible

scenario, and for this reason, flexibility and compromise on the part of the researcher are of prime significance.

There was no standard set of tactics employed for my informants. I took on a more customized approach per case, primarily depending on my relationship (or lack thereof) with the organization or the participant. However, it must be noted that some tactics were applied to all of them, such as the known sponsor approach (identifying myself with the university), demonstration of professional suitability (introducing myself as a PhD scholar and a former librarian), and openness (particularly in my motivation for conducting the research and the amount of time the participant would most likely have to commit). I also found that tactics are not mutually exclusive, hence a combination of two or more tactics have been put in place for some cases. Details on gaining access to individual cases can be found in Appendix D.

The industry was indeed a difficult one to penetrate. At the onset, six types of Philippine publishers were planned to be included in the study: academic, comics, self-, children's, trade, and pirated book publishers. This initial list was formulated with the intent to cover niche players in the industry.¹⁵ Particular interest was given to the pirated book publishers as I rendered their work of impeccable quality that is quite comparable to the original. Jurilla touched upon the subject of "book-alike" makers as well, a custom she referred to as "a refinement of an old practice—one that has become an unavoidable if not necessary part of the academic lives of both students and

¹⁵ Textbook publishing was not included as the wealth of data on this topic warrants a thesis of its own. In fact, Totanes (2012) wrote just such a thesis.

teachers in the Philippines” (2003, p.2). However, she also acknowledged the sensitivity of the subject matter. For this reason, she kept her investigation in a small shopping center situated in the University of the Philippines Diliman¹⁶, in consideration of the safety it could provide, given her affiliation with the institution.

My ties with the practice of librarianship and my involvement in the publishing industry may be assumed as barriers to entry (piracy, is, after all, frowned upon in these circles), but I attempted to use them to my advantage. However, the local booksellers I consulted who have had contact with “reformed pirates” strongly advised against pursuing the topic, as according to them this is a huge, syndicated operation, with regular police raids transpiring sporadically. I also endeavored to gain access to trade book publishing¹⁷ and contacted three major players in the field. Two of three publishers obliged, while a third participant was steadfastly pursued yet had to be discarded from the list¹⁸. One of the first two also requested a significant amount of information shared during the interview to be kept off the record, and the other one was apparently going out of business. Not much data from this segment

¹⁶ According to Jurilla (2008b) the book pirates in the University Belt in Manila would have provided more significant data, as this area along Recto Avenue is considered a hub for the production of counterfeit documents such as diplomas, licenses, and land titles, in addition to books.

¹⁷ Those that cover more than one type of material. For instance, both comics and children’s books, or a spread of academic books and books for leisure.

¹⁸ I initially considered substituting this publisher with a lesser known one, but after personal consultation with Jurilla, we both concurred that the contributions of this specific company to the field are too significant, that no replacement would suffice. After two rounds of ignored electronic mails and a failed attempt to reach the publisher through a phone call, persistence was carried out by using the known sponsor approach. The President of the Book Development Association of the Philippines (who was a participant herself) referred me for an interview, and the publisher/owner eventually accommodated me. During the meeting, the participant commended my tenacity, but after the two-hour interview I understood the individual’s reservations brought about by personal circumstances. I decided to abandon trade publishing at that point.

was then left for documentation and analysis. Given these circumstances, I was forced to settle with the remaining four types of publishers: academic, comics, self-, and children's, and resolved to examine them as specialized, separate niches in the industry.

I used purposive sampling in choosing my participants, a method Clifford (1997) vouched for as appropriate in phenomenological studies, given that researchers can then select participants knowledgeable in the particular phenomena. Cohen (2002) also said that this sample could be either those currently living the experience, or those who have lived it in the past—something which I used as my inclusion criteria. As Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) recommended a small, homogenous sample size (around three to six individuals), I settled for three participants, taking also into account intricacies of gaining access. After all, Carpenter (1999) contended that a smaller homogeneous sample is better than a larger group of participants in order that experiences can be analyzed in depth.

Participants were recruited by electronic mail opening with a self-introduction—including details such as my school and program of study, as well as the nature of my research. In some occasions, additional information such as where the publisher and I previously met or a common connection with the industry were included in order to establish rapport. E-conversations were kept brief and informal in order to set the foundation for having intimate and involved participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Ethics approval for this study was granted by the Institutional Review Board of the Nanyang Technological University (see Appendix A). Upon meeting my selected participants, consent was obtained through the informed consent form (see

Appendix B) which included details of the study. In one case, a participant held on to the consent form and chose to release it to me only after the interview, as a safeguard should they decide to withdraw participation or withhold consent at the end of the interview. I as the researcher took the risk (despite the anxiety), but became extra careful in veering away from sales figures or matters that may potentially include profits. For their convenience, I suggested that the interview be conducted in their place of work, but also gave them the option to conduct it in another place of their choosing. Following most IPA studies, data collection was conducted through interviews. For phenomenological research, Seidman (2006) enumerated three in-depth interview methods—the first focusing on past experiences, the second on present experiences, and the third, joining these two narratives. As my participants have been in the industry for years and are still in their publishing positions, I took on the third approach.

The *Epoché*

Prior to conducting my interviews, I bridled my preconceptions which were primarily stemming from my previous work experiences as an academic librarian for the Ateneo de Manila University (AdMU), a copyright associate for a local magazine publishing company, my grandfather, uncle, father and brother being involved in the industry as foreign publishers' representatives¹⁹ (and also my brief stint in my father's company), and even my educational background in library and information science. This procedure is what Marshall and Rossman (2011) referred to as the *epoché*—a self-examination, which is the first part of phenomenological inquiry.

¹⁹ The nature of the job did not compete with the businesses of participants in the research.

While qualitative researchers still consider using personal experience as a starting point of research a gray area, they advise resolving this by considering issues on power play and “insider” research and the challenge of making “the familiar strange” (Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2017). They suggest prompts for journaling with trigger questions such as the researcher’s knowledge of and familiarity with the people/participants and the place, if one is in a position of power or authority over the research participants, how pre-existing relation barriers may be overcome, whose perspective does the researcher wish to privilege or centralize, and the role of convenience in selecting the sample.

Being a part of the circuit made the experience more dynamic for me as I conducted my research. I was able to use my existing networks in the industry as my starting point in participant selection. However, as many of my participants are either my own personal contacts (or contacts of personal contacts), it was unsurprising for them to mention my being a librarian, or the nature of my family’s involvement in the industry. As my family owns a rather small operation compared to the publishing houses of the participants, it was clear that I was not in a significantly advantaged position above them. While some knew my father (and grandfather), most did not mention anything about my last name²⁰. In some occasions, they were familiar with me being a librarian. I had a direct professional relationship with one of the interviewees (Santos), and the rest were either strangers or contacts of my contacts. Such factors I used to my advantage—primarily as an icebreaker to mention my positionality in this research. I was honest, at the onset, that I was writing my

²⁰ While this, of course, may have stemmed from politeness, it is customary for Filipinos to mention or ask about familial affinity.

thesis with librarians in mind. It is also easy to assume that such details were contributing factors to them avoiding the mention of sales figures and other trade secrets—matters that escape the scope of my study anyway. However, my identity as an “insider” did help me gain access in many incidents.

Data Collection and Analysis

I used my interview schedule (see Appendix C) quite flexibly, particularly due to the fact that in IPA, the participant has a weighty involvement in the course and coverage of the interview. The semi-structured schedule comprised of general questions, such as, “What is your story?”, “How did you become a publisher?”, “What would you say is your best experience as a publisher?”, and “How about the worst?”. Following most semi-structured interviews, the sequence of the questions and the wordings by which they were asked varied on a case-to-case basis. This allowed for more respondent participation, as they become less constrained by the questions posed by the interviewer (Wooffitt & Widdicombe, 2006). At no point was Robert Darnton or his model mentioned in the interview, although I did ask them, in most occasions as a closing remark, what they thought of the notion that print culture is dying, as most of them published both in print and digitally. Most participants chose to have the interview in their own offices, while a few preferred a café or restaurant near their home or workplace.

The audiotaped interviews lasted between 60 to 180 minutes and were conducted in a mix of English and Filipino—which I later translated to Standard English. I initially did my own transcriptions a few days after the conduct of the interview, in order that there would be higher chances of me

recalling what was said in unclear or inaudible portions of the recordings. The process of transcribing and translating were physically and mentally taxing, warranting a few breaks every now and then, and hence lasted for about a week for each interview. These files were accessible only to me, and a Filipino transcriptionist I was eventually able to hire through a school-provided grant. I initially employed In Vivo coding (or verbatim coding) which Saldaña (2012) deemed appropriate for phenomenological research as well as for beginning qualitative researchers, but also recommended that it be combined with other coding strategies as it limits the researcher's perspective on the data. I hence employed process coding in my succeeding coding rounds, described by Saldaña as the use of gerunds for coding simple observable activity as well as more general conceptual actions. Codes varied within niches, with a few overlaps such as "arguing with stakeholders," "being a consumer themselves," and "facing distribution woes." A list of codes and initial themes (see Appendix E) was maintained. While "member checking" to verify themes and patterns from participants themselves is practiced by some qualitative researchers, I stand with the faction that considers this counterproductive, as "member checks may lead to a different type of understanding rather than a straightforward verification of what the researcher sees or does not see" (Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2017, p.68). A less unanimous agreement and competing points of view on the themes were common obstructions to analyses. Instead, participants were given the option to obtain a copy of the transcript and retract, add, or clarify anything they have stated within one month. Only one participant took up the offer, and shortly before the stipulated deadline, the publisher notified me that there were no changes necessary.

A case-by-case investigation was carried out through a systematic, qualitative analysis. Inductive reasoning was employed, and themes were allowed to emerge from the data. Guided by the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), one participant's experiences were first examined as a whole, and then juxtaposed with other cases within the niche. Analysis was conducted on how one's experience was similar or different with another case, and then later, compared to the rest. As a double hermeneutic necessitated by phenomenological research, a second layer of analysis was done, focusing on what the experience meant for a participant, how they described it as a lived experience, and my analysis of their analysis. The last part was aided, in part, by the Communication Circuit (Darnton, 1982).

The themes were transformed into a narrative account of a combination of my detailed analytic interpretation and verbatim extracts from participants, with the former supported by the latter. This phase involved identifying the very essence of the phenomenon (Patton, 1990), as well as the grouping of the data in themes which denote the "textures" of the experience before finally having a structural synthesis, or the exploration of all possible meanings and perspectives from the data (Creswell, 1998). Marshall and Rossman (2011) noted that the main benefit of this method is that "it permits an explicit focus on the researcher's personal experience combined with those of the interview partners" and that "it focuses on the deep, lived meanings that events have for individuals, assuming that these meanings guide actions and interactions" (p. 148-149). They, however, warned that it is labor intensive and would entail a lot of reflexivity from the researcher (something I found very true) yet also

offered a couple of comforting examples of successfully conducted phenomenological interviews.

**CHAPTER FIVE FULFILLING THE CULTURAL
WITHOUT FORSAKING THE COMMERCIAL:
CONTEMPORARY UNIVERSITY PUBLISHERS IN THE
PHILIPPINES**

In the second chapter, I established that the Philippine book trade industry is not lacking in challenges. It surely does not help that the introduction of the electronic format of the book caused disruption in the industry on a global scale, with an increasing number of players disintermediated, or in other words, eliminated from the chain of operations (Murray & Squires, 2013). Yet, in spite of the seemingly austere situation, there remain a few privileged individuals.

One such case is the Philippine university publisher. I interviewed publishers from three top-ranking universities in the Philippines based on QS University Rankings (2015), De La Salle University (DLSU), Ateneo de Manila University (AdMU), and the University of the Philippines (UP). DLSU and AdMU are privately owned, while UP is a state university. Here I present and investigate the recurring themes surrounding university publishing in the Philippines. Towards the end of this chapter, I offer a contextualization of Darnton's model in the Philippines—based on the perspective of university publishers.

Darnton spelled out the responsibilities of publishers as the following: drawing up contracts with authors, building alliances with booksellers, negotiating with political authorities, and handling finances, supplies,

shipments, and publicity. Such duties entail not just an intellectual capacity on the part of the publisher to filter good material from the bad, but also a certain level of business acumen to be able to handle operational and managerial duties. Greco, Milliot, and Wharton (2014) agreed that publishers indeed carry dual and often contradictory missions. They need to perform cultural roles by determining which works are significant enough to be published as books, but they also have a commercial responsibility to the publishing houses they work for.

Evidently performing the former is the university publisher. University presses tend to be viewed as “on the margins of the field” because they produce few trade materials (Thompson, 2012, p. 182). Their mandate is to produce “scholarly monographs, that is, high-level academic books that are written by academics and researchers and intended primarily for other academics and researchers. They are first and foremost educational institutions that are concerned with the development and transmission of knowledge rather than commercial enterprises” (p. 182). Such a practice of books made by academics for academics is reminiscent of what Robert Escarpit (1971) called the *cultured group*. He opined that the distribution of literary materials must be segregated into social groups, as each group represents a cultural need different from the needs of others. This cultured group, according to him, are “persons having received an intellectual training and an esthetic [sic] education advanced enough to enable them to exercise literary and personal judgments, having sufficient time to read, and having enough money to buy books with regularity” (p. 59)—in addition to having the clearest sense of literary identity. In other

words, they knew what, who, and why they want to read. This elite group, as Escarpit contended, forms a closed caste.

This small market was analyzed by Bourdieu (1983) using his concept of a field of cultural production. Here he opined that books, when viewed through the lenses of value, may be considered as cultural artefacts and economic products, further stressing that cultural capital is actually inversely proportional to market size, that disinterestedness from the masses is a quintessential characteristic of cultural work, and that value is not measured in terms of sales or financial gains. In essence, the masses are not the market of cultural work—and those who are operating in this field must strive to seek approval from those who were also in the business of producing such specialized materials—reminiscent of Escarpit’s closed caste cultured group.

Greco, Milliot, and Wharton (2014) likewise added that faculty members often publish their works in university presses to secure employment or to advance in academia, and further remarked that authorities in such fields such as deans and vice presidents perceive university presses as better than their commercial counterparts. In a later work (Greco & Aiss, 2015), they noted that most university press directors in Canada and the United States began their careers as assistant editors of commercial presses, and a few others gained publishing experience by doing sales in trade houses. They likewise related that a small number received financial training in business schools, and that a vast majority of North American press directors had a more or less homogeneous sales and marketing training from attending the same scholarly conferences and reading the same distributor reports.

Thompson however narrated how things have been changing for university presses, at least in the West. He noted that their activities were no longer confined to scholarly pursuits, citing how Harvard University Press had ploughed its way into trade publishing alongside its academic line of titles—a model which other university presses have begun emulating since the late 1980s. According to him, such diversification is pursued for commercial gain. Thompson provided several reasons for this trend. To begin with, developments stemmed from the decline of sales of scholarly monographs, which resulted in their host universities pushing them to be more financially independent. Consequently, they started exploring regional publishing (materials on regional history, culture, and environment) and trade publishing. Second is the shifting of the overall publishing field due to large corporations buying the smaller independent publishers, hence vacating some space in trade publishing which university presses are able to penetrate. The third is the rise of the retail chains—granting university presses a distribution channel for their books which are academic yet possess trade potential. These three developments, according to Thompson, were responsible for the involvement of university presses in trade books. Yet, he also contended that they remain marginal, with very little capacity to compete with the bigger mainstream publishers—primarily in attracting authors to publish their content with them, as well as limited influence and resources to bargain for shelf space in big retail chains to make their products more visible. Despite these disadvantages, however, university publishers still see value in participating in this specific market. The key according to them is to participate modestly, with tactics such as signing once-

established authors who had big trade houses uninterested in them due to their declining popularity (Thompson, 2012).

Context on ADMU, DLSU, and UP

In this section, I provide context on the three universities and their presses. Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU), De La Salle University (DLSU), and the University of the Philippines are three top-ranking schools in the Philippines based on QS University Rankings (2015).

ADMU was established in 1859 by Spanish Jesuits, hence starting out as a (Spanish) government-funded university. In 1902, the Americans withdrew its government subsidy, and it was eventually converted into a private university in 1909. Its original campus in Manila was destroyed by World War II, but the university survived and moved in 1946 to Sampaloc, Manila, and then in 1952 to Loyola Heights in Quezon City, where it is still located. It established its university press in 1972, and has since birthed books on the Philippines and Asia. The Press was awarded Publisher of the Year in 2008, in addition to having an extensive list of award-winning titles.

DLSU was similarly established by Roman Catholic priests. In 1911, the *Fratres Scholarum Christianarum* (Brothers of the Christian Schools), and was incorporated as a private institution in 1912. The DLSU campus was also a victim of war, with Japanese soldiers occupying parts of its campus. It closed for a time, following the massacre of 16 priests and 25 other residents in the Liberation of Manila in 1945. The Press was established in 1983 under the university's research center before it became an officially autonomous unit in 1987. It takes pride in publishing the most number of scholarly journals among

Southeast Asian universities, in addition to having the best royalty rates offered by a university press in the Philippines.

Unlike the two aforementioned universities, UP is an American (regime) born university. The first president was an American, Murray Bartlett, but in 1915 the first Filipino UP president, Ignacio Villamor, was appointed. It was established in 1908, and was housed in downtown Manila. To this day, UP remains a state university. However, similar to the two other universities, World War II was not kind to UP. Following the destruction of many of its buildings, the main campus was relocated to Diliman, Quezon City. It established its press in 1965, and has since garnered accolades such as the Book of the Year award from the Manila Critics Circle, the Madrigal Gonzales Best First Book Award, and the Outstanding Book of the Year award from the National Academy of Science and Technology. The Press has been awarded Publisher of the Year Award thrice.

Introducing Santos, Bayot, and Garcia

As my research requires a deep understanding of the participants, context is set on their educational and professional background in the following paragraphs.

Rica Bolipata-Santos has always been in the humanities. In 1991 she obtained her bachelor's degree in humanities, garnered her master's degree in English literature in 2000, and finished her PhD in English studies in 2013. She finished her first two degrees in the Ateneo de Manila University, where she served as director of the university press. Meanwhile, she completed her doctorate in the University of the Philippines. She has been a high school

teacher (one of her subjects taught was Philippine Literature, unsurprisingly), a cultural affairs officer, a bookstore owner, an assistant professor, editor, and acted as consultant in different capacities. She is a published writer and a columnist for a major spreadsheet.

David Jonathan Bayot has been with the De La Salle University for quite a long time. He finished his AB in Literature in 1990, his MA in Language and Literature in 1995, and his PhD in Literature in 2004—all from DLSU. Bayot may be considered as a textbook academic achiever, with high distinction for both his graduate degrees, and a gold medal for outstanding dissertation for his doctorate. He served as assistant professor in the same university from 2001-2003, and received tenure in 2005. He was acting chair of the Department of Literature for that same year, before he became fully appointed as chair from 2006-2010. He was also graduate programs director for the university in 2005, and general editor for its *Critics in Conversation* series from 2013 up to the time of the interview. He became Executive Publisher for DLSU in 2012. Bayot has had dealings with other universities as well, serving as visiting lecturer in the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies of the Ateneo de Manila University in 2004-2006, and general editor of the *Critical Voices* series of Sussex Academic Press in 2015.

J. Neil Garcia received his bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Santo Tomas in 1990. He finished his master's in comparative literature in 1995 and doctorate in English studies in 2003, both from the University of the Philippines, where he served as director for the university press. He is, apart from a publisher, also a professor and a poet. He has received acclaim for his poetry collections and works on literary and cultural criticism.

He has won several writing awards, including the prestigious Carlos Palanca Memorial Award and the National Book Award.

Findings

Thompson (2012) painted a clear picture of contemporary university publishers in the West. We see that despite being cognizant of their cultural roles, their respective university administrations also expect them to have an increasing capacity to fulfill commercial roles, hence their resort to different coping measures. It is also evident that there exists an apparent set of characteristics shared by North American university publishers—that of having ample experience and training in the field. Such pressures and characteristics are not necessarily valid generalizations for those in the Philippines.

Academic Experiences

All three university publishers hold full-time faculty positions in addition to their appointment as directors of the press. All three interestingly have doctoral degrees in and are professors of literature—something which they consider a boon and a bane. It accords them a certain level of literary adequacy, yet it also is a blind spot, a preference to the humanities, which they need to bridle when they evaluate manuscripts. David Jonathan Bayot of DLSU was chair of the Literature department prior to his press appointment, and J. Neil Garcia of UP had been with the English department for 24 years. Rica Bolipata Santos had likewise been with AdMU's English department²¹.

²¹ Santos was, months after the conduct of my interview, recruited by another school to serve as dean of their humanities program. She came back to AdMU as an assistant professor and director of the University Communication and Public Relations Office a year after.

Their teaching experiences also manifest themselves in their conduct of day-to-day operations at the press, particularly in terms of their relations with other press employees. This, however, has been experienced differently, depending on the manager. As Santos stressed, the most important thing for her is nurturing the people she worked with.

It's a teacher thing ... It's almost as if what I do in the classroom is the same as what I do here, which is—everything is a teaching moment ... I could have [managed the press] that my best experience would have been to produce the kind of books [that are significant]. I can tell you that, that I was able to do and finish those tasks. But to have been able to do that would mean I would have to do [nasty] stuff to the staff here ... Those are just books at the end of the day, although I'm passionate about those books, changing the world, and all of that, [but] the individual contribution you do to an individual's life would always outweigh [those things]. I have no control over how that book will change somebody else's life—but [I do in] the lives of the people I work with.

The same sentiments on teaching were shared by Garcia, but for him, the focus was on the students. He related, “I am a teacher. So I enjoy teaching. Being in the university is a hat ... a hat with many hats inside it ... I'm just being part of a university that ... is working towards the lot of the country. It's a university which tries to actually educate Filipinos from diverse backgrounds ... It's a sense of purpose.” A different standpoint was taken by Bayot, who exhibited a higher level of business acumen than the two other publishers. “I have always seen business to be a part of me, so is that something so different from my teaching? I don't think so, because when I do teach, I really think of myself as ... a businessman selling the ideas to the students. The kind of fulfilment that I feel when somebody buys my product in business, is the same fulfilment that I feel when my students buy my ideas.”

In addition to being teachers, all three also demonstrated a deep understanding of authors, having done some writing themselves. As Garcia noted, “I’m a writer so I’ve written books that have come out—and its always exciting for a writer when his or her book comes out. Now you actually have to feel excited for other people, because your writing ... has to take the back seat as you’re doing something else. And then I also do editing. I basically join the copyediting team, because you know, sometimes we run out of editors so I do it ... It’s a joy to read material that’s not been printed yet and you’re the first one to read [it] other than the author.” Santos, who has published both academic and trade materials, also held strong empathic feelings for authors. As she related, “[My experience] as an author—and this probably stuck with me for the longest time—whenever we would go around the *caravans*²² with other authors, the kids are surprised that the author [of the book] is alive! They always assume that the author is dead—that they couldn’t believe that there’s a human being who actually writes books and has made a career out of it.” Although not having a published book yet, Bayot of DLSU was an editor before and after joining the press, allowing him to have close dealings with authors as well. He served as a general editor of the Critical Voices series of the Sussex Academic Press, and his first stint was editing the book of his predecessor in the DLSU Publishing House. He attributed many of his learning experiences as a neophyte to advice he received from established foreign authors he has worked with.

They always tell me in one way or the other, you have to be brave. When that publisher turned you down, you don’t [say], “Oh my gosh, it’s the end of the world!” When this publisher turns you down, ten publishers turns you down, there are the 11th, the 12th... so do not just give up like that. I used to be a person who—I am very sensitive. So when somebody

²² Vans that go around towns and cities to promote books.

rejected me, I really took that personally. It's working with them, I told you—the work ethics, the corollary of which is that the attitude that you don't simply just take no as a matter of life and death. There are others.

Santos related that when she was beginning her stint at the press, she was eager to learn from the other local university publishers—but found her attempts to do so in vain. “There's an association of university presses here . . . We meet once a year, and nobody really wants to share real secrets because it's a small industry. But for me, being an academic is natural for me, hence I am naturally curious—I wanna know how you do things! But because we're so small, nobody will really share. Even for myself I don't really want to share. So I would [just] visit those presses [abroad], and from them I learned a lot.” She noted that the other foreign academic publishers were very generous with her during her benchmarking trip a few months back.

From the academic identity of our university publishers, I observe a close link to what Escarpit (1971) referred to as the cultured group. They are evidently academics who speak the language of other academics, not just those in the Philippines, but as their narratives reveal, also their foreign counterparts. As one of them said, his selling point to big shot authors was that he was a publisher and editor “who knows your work very well” (Bayot). This membership to the closed cultured caste is indicative of their reliability as barometers of taste for the academic community.

At this juncture, the close relations between the publishers and their authors are also very evident—arguably also because they belong to the same academic background. And not only are authors learning from publishers, but publishers are also able to gather some know-how in their dealings with their authors. Such exchanges are open flows of ideas and information—information

which would not have been received from their own kind (i.e., other local university publishers) understandably due to competition in the miniscule industry they operated in.

Learning the Ropes

Although having no formal training in management, the publishers were, in different ways and degrees, familiar with the business. Bayot admittedly fulfilled the stereotype of the entrepreneurial Chinese national in the Philippines—a person who is skillful in making business ventures succeed. “I’m a full—100 percent, 101 percent Chinese. I grew up in a business family, and I have been into many businesses—I’ve been into jewelry business. I’ve been running a fast food store ... I used to raise orchids, so I have always seen business to be a part of me,” Bayot narrated. Santos grew up in a family of printers. She shared that “...the history of that is my parents’ business was really a publishing firm that turned to security printing ... My father would do the printing and the computerization of results, but when we were small and young we were a printing press, and we did literary magazines ... so I know how production works.” Garcia was familiarized with the process through publishing with the press regularly since 1996. He explained, “...when your book is being processed, you make several trips here. You have to talk to your editor, and then you talk about the cover design, and so I got to see their operations. And then the former director was my friend, so ... over *merienda*²³ she would tell me about issues, problems... So entering the job, [I] was not completely ignorant.” He however was quick to add that “I didn’t know the

²³ Afternoon tea.

nitty-gritty and how much actual legwork [had to be done]—or the legwork part and all those things. I didn't know them until I started working.”

Nevertheless, Santos and Garcia found it necessary to hire a business person to take care of the commercial aspect of their presses. Santos related how she had to bring this person with her to board meetings. “They send me statements that I really do not understand—the one with charts. And it seemed like Father [Jett Villarin, President of ADMU] finds pleasure in correcting my charts. And then he would speak to me about margins of loss—and I would be like, ‘What’s that?’ And then when I present the budget, there are six directors under the president’s office—all women, and I would be the only one with a business person with me. All of the others can do theirs on their own! I’m like, ‘Nope! There are limits to my talent!’” The case was similar for Garcia, who shared, “My deputy has been the deputy of two other directors. And that was the condition of my assuming the position is I’m going to keep them because I’m going to die if I have to learn the ropes. They fill me in—the veterans here on what the institutional memory [is]. They have it. So I haven’t really done anything completely out of the ordinary.”

Such a move is indicative of a humble awareness of their inadequate business know-how. However, it is also a reflection of a lesser degree of professionalization of university publishing in the Philippines compared to the West. While Canadian and American press directors are expected to have formal training and ample on-the-job experiences in the conduct of publishing (Thompson, 2012), I find here that such qualifications are unnecessary to be a university publisher in the Philippines.

A Mandate Sui Generis

The mandate of Philippine university publishers is not just different from other local commercial publishers; it also slightly deviates from current practices of university presses situated in the West. Garcia reiterated that the mandate of his press is not necessarily to make money. “[The mandate is to publish] excellent Filipino books that are scholarly and literary--and basically to make profit is not part of the mandate.” Garcia revealed that they can afford to do so thanks to the salary subsidy from the government, UP being a state university. “Our employees here are actually getting their salaries from government. So ... we only use the income from the sales of our books for operational expenses to produce more books and to pay for electricity and stuff ... and equipment.” He explained that this placed them in a better position than commercial publishers, who had to pay for everything using revenue from sales. Santos likewise described her press as “the supreme expression of the university in its engagement in nation-building because it is the fastest [way] ... If you wanted to change the world, make a book!” She however related how at the onset of her appointment, she suffered from self-imposed pressure to make money for the press. “July last year, Father [Villarin] told me, ‘Why are you worried about this, when I myself am not?’ It was just like, I wake up every morning thinking I have to finish 103 books—that I have to make money and it’s intrinsically impossible with what has been given me! The press hasn’t made money in ten years... so it’s not gonna make money now! All those charts would [cause me stress], and I got sick. I’m trying very hard to relax which doesn’t work—but I’m trying. So that would have been the worst part, that I didn’t know how to mediate fixing the issues. There was just so much ... but the

press is better now.” Bayot concurred with the atypical concerns for university presses. The goal according to him was knowledge production. “The [other] publishing houses, I think it’s not that they are less—they are [merely] performing a different role ... Of course they have their commercial aspect to take care of, and I wouldn’t have any quarrel with them about that. Their idea is probably to ... publish those kinds of books that can offer knowledge in ... a more diluted format for the general readers.”

Such unique duties, which could otherwise be unexpected of other publishing houses, reveal that university presses operate on a different kind of capital. As Bayot contended, “But the university press ... has an expectation to live up to, right? ... Popularizing cannot be the main contribution of a university press,” echoing Bourdieu’s (1983) concept of mass disinterestedness for works which are highly cultural in value. This small reach is affirmed by Santos, who shared that “...sometimes there is that possibility that the book needs to be published, but nobody will buy, and you invest in a capital—knowledge capital or influence capital ... It’s going to be the same ten people who were part of the book who’ll buy the book, but it will translate to something for the country—something for the world.” Her words also portray that monetary losses were not necessarily a big issue for them.

Going Digital... and Back

The publishers also related how they have dealt with different projects over time. One of the more recent ones is their exploration of e-books. “Finally we are modern,” Santos exclaimed. She clarified that the rationale behind going digital was because she wanted to be distributed abroad, and recounted her

recent experiences attending the Book Expo America in New York. “Because when I was at the book fair last year, my first feeling was [that] nobody wants to talk to me because you still have to ship my books. It seemed like I had no currency there, so I said the next time I go—which was this year, I need to have some e-books with me so they would be interested to carry me.”

A similar perspective was communicated by Garcia, who opined, “Isn’t the whole world going digital?” He further explained,

We’ve sort of adopted the model of American publishing houses, which is to actually copartner first, because you cannot transform existing academic presses overnight into e-publishers. That means basically creating a new department, and having training, and basically expanding operations. The best is to actually partner, so you produce the content and you get a digital distributor to market it globally through e-book format, and so you kind of ... tap that market already. And you basically don’t incur too much, too many expenses in the process, for the moment.

The turn of events was quite different for Bayot, who relayed how they went from print to electronic, and back to print again. “It’s not selling. So we put it—you cannot say it’s not in Amazon. It’s in Amazon, it’s in Apple iTunes, in Kobo, in Barnes and Noble. It doesn’t sell! It doesn’t sell ... The sales are low... The sales are really low because I get a monthly report of the—one copy sold, one copy, another copy next month. It’s not selling ... I ceased e-book production for now. They explain to me the reason why it doesn’t sell is because, e-books, just like print books, also need marketing. You cannot just put it up there and then you expect people to know about it.” The e-book business was still in the starting stage for both Santos and Garcia, who were hence unable to comment on how it had been working on their presses so far.

On Niche Finding and Diversifying

Similar to many other industries, university presses established their own niche markets. As Santos reported, “The press started really publishing social sciences, so it is known for its social science publications primarily ... It’s just the way we started but I don’t know if it’s something *a priori* like Ateneo Press decided it would only do social science, or [if] it’s just something that happened naturally so it became our strength. But also because there are only about four major university presses, so we’ve kind of like stuck to our own expertise. It was like, why will I compete with UP which has a very good literary publication niche? So we kind of like just took our own little kingdoms along the way.” Santos also shared plans of launching a young adult (YA) anthology—something that had not been done by other local university presses before.

On the discussion of establishing their niche, Bayot disclosed that for him it seemed like they were in a disadvantaged position compared to Ateneo and UP.

They have already contacted all these big name Filipino authors. I thought, what’s really the point of fighting over this little corpus of things? I thought, if I really wanted [to participate], I’ll have to niche myself elsewhere. Then, I thought of another thrust of the university—which is internationalization. If we really want to internationalize, you want people to know what DLSU is, you can [not just] keep publishing the Philippine authors. The Philippine academics will know about [them], but foreign universities will never have heard of [them]. So what I did was I make [sic] the initiative to target foreign authors.

Such a move was novel for Philippine university presses, who were by and large publishers of Filipino authors.

The case is different for UP though, which established its niche in the humanities, and then later decided to diversify. As Garcia narrated, “I’ve tried to

sort of balance the humanities and literary titles against the scholarly ones, so I think we've been putting out more—trying to put out more scholarly books coming from as diverse disciplines as possible. So now we're putting out a book of medical parasitology. We have books on economics, books in natural sciences, so we're trying to sort of even the balance.”

What do these endeavors entail? With lesser financial pressure, it is evident that the university publishers are able to make riskier decisions than their commercial counterparts. It is logical to assume that given the financial constraints of commercial presses, moves such as publishing authors outside what is considered the norm, breaking ground in young adult anthologies, branching out from tried and tested niches, and exploring e-books would otherwise have entailed more planning and preparation, if at all implemented. And while Thompson narrated that Western university presses did experiment with trade books in order to recuperate financially, the motivation was different for Philippine university presses—who did so in order to extend the borders of their cultural territories. Santos wanted to tap a younger local demographic; Garcia wished to cover more areas of interest. Both of them were interested in reaching an international market, while Bayot worked on bringing in foreign ideas into the Philippines. Such moves are symptomatic of a heightened cultural role with the capacity to make itself even higher, given that their economy runs on a different (non-monetary) currency.

Maintaining Practicality

Santos firmly believed that even though she was not mandated to make money, the ethical way to run the press was at least to try to break even. Such level-

headedness was shared by Garcia, who stressed that, “the mandate is clear, but you cannot be completely blind to the reality.” He further elucidated his point by citing a recent example of a practical decision he had to make for the press.

You cannot be stumbling foolishly making decisions you know would be a complete waste of money, right? Like you know basically once a book or a manuscript has been approved—you kinda get to decide how best to sort of balance, right? The practicality question with the excellence question, right? And you know ... I'll give you an example—it's a very good book but it's very technical. And probably will not sell so fast. So, the author would like full colour print. Like anthropological and beautiful. If we did that, that would basically be the press committing let's say more than half a million [pesos] (around US\$10,600) to publishing it. That much, because it's full color. So ... your kind of practical side will actually tell you, can we enter into a co-publishing with another entity that's part of the discipline, that actually has an interest in this book, and we're willing to actually acknowledge it and put it on the cover, the title page. So the example would be the tattooing book ... It's a tattooing book that we published with the Cordillera Studies Center of UP Baguio. They do have money ... So we have a hard bound version of this. This is just the soft bound, but you see it's a visual documentation, and tattooing is a visual art among other things, so you need to have it in full color. It would have been too expensive if the press actually spent for the printing completely using its own funds. And so what we did was we entered into an agreement with the Cordillera Studies Center ... So it's an important book and it passed the evaluation process, and you really want to print it but because of the special concerns, you have to sort of use your business side somehow and find a way, the best way, to make that happen.

Bayot also posed a fair warning about the sustainability of running a press without the commercial aspect in mind.

We have a DLSU Press since the [19]80s but, I think let's put it very bluntly, it sort of went bankrupt ... as many academic presses would, especially if it's being managed by people who are not really businesspeople ... These are people who are scholars, they want to publish this, publish that, but you need money to sustain the press, right? So after I suppose eight years of operation within the university, they thought maybe the reason why it's using money is it's not businesslike ... So [since] they really wanted to make it businesslike operations ... they purchased lots of machines. They have a really big office, really heavily staffed, so after I think [after] ten years of operation [sic] they had to declare bankrupt too, but prior to the bankruptcy, or somehow very close to the bankruptcy, the people or the administrators in the press thought, maybe a good idea to save this press, to redeem what we built so far, was to probably cut down on the benefits of the laborers, the workers, the

employees. So, since they have a union, so there's some kind of a threat of a union strike. So, since union strike has always been a bad word for DLSU administrators, so what they did was to really declare bankrupt, and then shut it down.

He clarified, however, that after a few years the DLSU administration thought, "any decent university must have a university press" and thus decided to reopen in 2012, hiring Bayot, a businessman, as its director, and resolving to never purchase heavy machinery again.

Such a finding clearly demonstrates that publishing, as Greco, Milliot, and Wharton (2014) pointed out, involves a duality of roles. The commercial cannot be stripped off from the cultural—yet it appears that the dichotomy between these roles is not necessarily half-and-half, as some publishers are more cultural than commercial, and vice versa. In this case, Philippine university publishers have the advantage to be more of the former than the latter.

Relationships in the Darnton Context

In the succeeding paragraphs, I examine and present their relationships with the players in the circuit they interact with using Robert Darnton's model.

In the original Communications Circuit, the publisher had direct relations with authors and printers, and his connections with readers were mediated by booksellers, which in turn were mediated by shippers. In the narratives of university publishers, however, I found that these relationships may be true in principle, but not necessarily in practice.

As I also mentioned in the second chapter, Darnton asserted that there existed a two-way relationship between the author and the publisher, reflecting that authors sought publishers just as the latter did the former. While this is also

true in the case of Philippine university publishers, what is absent from the original Communications Circuit is the reflection that an overlap existed between the publisher and the author. As mentioned earlier, Philippine university publishers are authors themselves, and are able to use this to their advantage. At this juncture, it becomes evident that a key weakness in Darnton's model is his notion that the roles in the circuit are mutually exclusive—when results of my preliminary investigation clearly demonstrate otherwise. Being authors themselves, however, did not spare them from some challenges in these dealings. Santos recounted, “I've had a lot of heartaches with authors. They would really make me cry.” Bayot also had his fair share of troubles. He narrated that his best experiences as a publisher were in fact his dealings with foreign authors, but the reverse was true for local authors.

The worst are with the Filipino authors ... That's why I don't want to deal very much with them. Not really the lesser the better, but, unless it's a really worthy manuscript, I wouldn't even want to deal with them. Number one, these people can be too full of themselves. They're actually nobody in the international world, but they are probably somebody [in the Philippines]. [But that] ... can mean so many things—[being] somebody ... does not necessarily mean [you are] intelligent or [you have] academic recognition or stature. These people are known because their father is such and such, so and so, that kind of thing. So ... they can be very demanding. They're very demanding. I'm not saying all, but many of them are interested in money—like, “How much royalty am I gonna get?” You are publishing scholarly books, how much royalty do you expect to get? Right?

Such is indicative that while there is an advantage to being an author-publisher, it does not necessarily guarantee a problem-free relationship with other authors. As the data revealed, this connection is an intricately complicated one, requiring not just a high intellectual capacity on the part of the publisher, but also exceedingly good social skills. Also, while Murray and Squires posited

agent-publisher conflicts in their work, the case is slightly different for the Philippines, where authors act as their own agents. It is interesting to note however that just as Murray and Squires speculated, monetary issues are indeed the prime subjects of these arguments.

Another overlapping pair is the publisher and the bookseller, in that the publishers also act as distribution channels themselves—with UP and AdMU having their own bookstores attached to their publishing offices, and UP planning on opening another branch of its bookstore in a nearby upscale commercial mall in 2016²⁴. And while Murray and Squires already recognized some overlapping between authors and publishers as well as publishers and retailers and distributors in the electronic publishing world, what is lacking from their prognosis is that such overlaps can also exist in the production of print books—as well as in an environment where both print and digital books are involved.

According to Darnton, publishers also relate with printers unidirectionally, with the publisher passing on the book (or what it is so far) to the printer. In his model, after going through the hands of the printer, the book has to pass through a shipper before it reaches booksellers, and then finally, readers. In the narratives of Philippine university publishers though, I found that in the early days of their operations, all three presses chose to do their own printing in-house—negating the existence of an external printer in Darnton’s model. However, due to changes in the economy, these practices ceased to be practical for them, and hence forced the publishers to revert to outsourcing their printing needs. As Bayot recounted, losses incurred from the purchase of

²⁴ As of writing, this plan is yet to be materialized.

expensive printing machinery were one of the causes of the financial downfall of DLSU's press. Garcia likewise rendered an in-house printery "a load on your back." He further related, "It was just not efficient because you have so many options for printers. If you want to go for the best quality that's cost effective and cheap, you can have it bid out ... I think that's the model now for most presses." Such a finding suggests that printers have initially been disintermediated in that their roles were absorbed by publishing houses, but are now once again in operation. This also implies the possibility of a reversal of disintermediation. However, it is also evident that this reversal occurred for printers not because of their own proactivity. Instead, as Bayot narrated, it happened due to changes in the economic conjuncture, as outsourcing became once again cheaper than doing printing in house. This reinforces the present-day relevance of Darnton's external forces that affect the life cycle of the book.

It is also noteworthy that the book is not passed on by the printer directly to a shipper (who in turn, according to Darnton, must pass it on to the bookseller). In the case of the Philippines, the printer hands the goods back to the publisher, who decides which ones to allocate for his own bookstore, and which ones he has to pass on to a third party bookseller. This outsourcing business is the exact opposite of the point made by Murray and Squires—who opined that publishers in the digital age were outsourcing *their* own services (such as editing) in order to answer financial pressures from their higher ups as well as to ease their anxiety of being obsolete and irrelevant. Such a state of affairs is not evidenced in the Philippines.

Another case of disintermediation is that of all the other roles between the publisher and the reader (printer, supplier, shipper, and bookseller), as the

university publishers penetrated the e-book market. However, as demonstrated by the narrative of Bayot, such shifts were short-lived, at least for his case, and he went back to the previous setup (producing and selling only print copies) after recognizing that offering e-books did not benefit his press.

As such, I propose the following model as a tentative representation of the Philippine book trade, based on the results presented in this chapter.

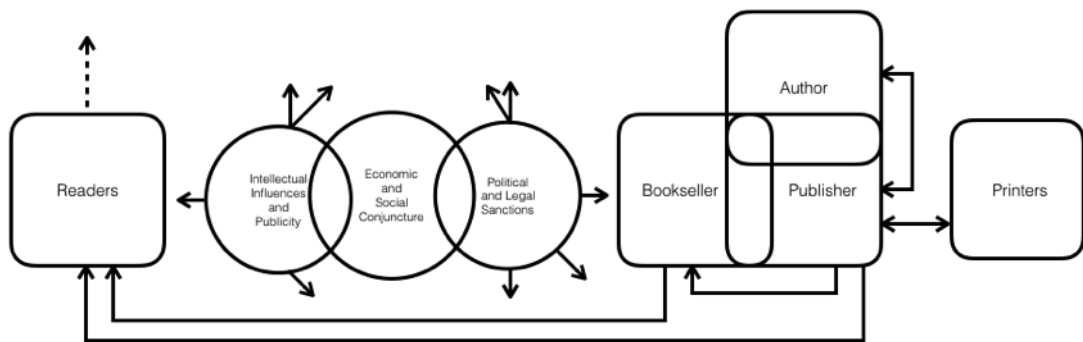


Figure 4. The Communications Circuit from the Standpoint of Philippine University Publishers.

Putting the differences revealed by my data into perspective, it can be surmised that the above model is more reflective of the nature of Philippine book trade, yet I need to pose a caveat that it is that way *so far*. As my study progressed and as documented in the succeeding chapters, perspectives from the other players in the circuit introduced changes to the current application of Darnton's model.

Apart from the overlaps discussed in the previous paragraphs, there are a few other key differences between my model and that of Darnton's. I have put in place a direct arrow between the publisher and the reader, reminiscent of Murray and Squires as well as Clark and Phillips. However, unlike the latter scholars, in my model this relationship does not replace the arrow between the

publisher and the bookseller. These two relationships, in fact, coexist. While publishers may have been doing some direct selling themselves, they still allocate some of their materials for distribution by a third party bookseller. Also, my publisher-reader relationship does not only represent direct e-book sales from the websites of the university presses, but also sales from printed books purchased by readers from their own university press bookstores—the fulfillment of the bookseller role by the publisher.

Another key point is that while Darnton established that readers faded into authors (as some readers become authors themselves), I challenge this notion as correct but rather incomplete. As my results reveal, publishers are also readers, using their knowledge of literary works as a major selling point of their credibility as a publisher. At this point, they can actually be labeled as authors-publishers-once printers-booksellers-readers. Are publishers readers merely because, in this case, they are also authors? More importantly, is the “fading” relationship with readers exclusive to authors? Obviously not—that I can answer easily at this juncture. But to which other players do readers fade into, then? And to what extent does this fading happen?

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discovered that Philippine university presses were run by academics who belonged to Escarpit’s (1971) cultured group—which works in terms of understanding this closed caste that most (if not all) of their authors (and even the publishers themselves) belong to. However, their being full-time literature professors is also reflective of the lesser degree of professionalization of university publishing in the Philippines compared to the West, where press

directors are given more formal training. My analysis also revealed that university publishing in the Philippines, similar to the case of the West, is a small industry. However, unlike in the West where they compete with commercial presses (Thompson, 2012), those in the Philippines are able to focus on other niches, thanks to the lack of financial pressure from their institutions. It also is important to note that the local landscape is not as competitive in nature. They settled on their own territories—UP in the humanities, AdMU in the social sciences, and DLSU in foreign authors. And while they were not able to share their own trade secrets with one another, they still learn from other players in the publishing circuit (such as authors) as well as from university publishers from overseas. As noted by Garcia, they have adopted the American model of e-book publishing, although Bayot reverting from digital to print was also indicative that e-book consumption in the Philippines, at least in the context of highbrow materials, has not arrived yet. This relegates the issue of disintermediation for publishers, at least for now, at rest. Delving more on this matter though, I also found that it is also possible for disintermediated players to be incorporated in the circuit again—as in the case of printers, at least in relation to university publishers.

This chapter also confirms that publishing is Janus faced—a two-pronged approach balancing the cultural with the commercial. It can be surmised that DLSU learned this from experience, hence hiring someone like Bayot, a person with impeccable business sense, to run their press. On the subject of role dichotomy though, the actual percentage which goes into cultural and commercial is of course relative, and hence open to debate and further discussions. As I have found, some publishing houses are more cultural than

commercial and vice versa, and Philippine university presses belong to the former. There also surfaced sufficient evidence that given the less commercial pressure, Philippine university publishers are able to focus more on their cultural roles.

Such findings tender a fresh perspective on university presses, especially when we juxtapose those in the Philippines with their Western counterparts (which are, as portrayed by literature, apparently pressured to make money). While of course it has been established that commercial duties are not to be taken for granted, the primary mandate, as Thompson also stressed, is to produce knowledge and not to make money. Perhaps the case of the Philippines, a developing country no less, can serve as a good reminder of what it really means to be a university press.

My preliminary results offer a snapshot of contemporary Philippine university publishing. They also give us something to compare with experiences in the West, a better understanding of the roles of publishers (and why some publishers were more cultural or commercial than others), and a Philippine contextualization of Darnton's Communications Circuit which is more reflective of the country's book trade industry—again, *so far*.

CHAPTER SIX THE INDUSTRY AVENGERS: CONTEMPORARY COMICS PUBLISHERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Comics in the Philippines remains an understudied area. Such a state of affairs may be attributed to various factors: the limelight being on the Japanese manga (Schwartz & Rubinstein Ávila, 2006; Cohn, 2010; Hayley, 2010), comics studies being a relatively less developed subject area (Hatfield, 2006; Groensteen, 2009), or the fact that comics characters by companies Marvel and DC in the United States reign in terms of global attention (Gerde & Foster, 2008; Pepper, 2015). In fact, the impression for many is that Filipinos involved in the comics industry are merely foreign workers who illustrate for Marvel and DC (MacDonald & Yeh, 2015). As I investigate the experiences of contemporary comics publishers in the Philippines, I find that such was but a fragment of the grander scheme of this industry in the country.

One of the most in depth studies on this subject is May Jurilla's examination of the business of comics publishing from the late 1940s to the mid-1980s (2008). Jurilla noted that comics publishing in the Philippines has a history of bestseller success, but had its share of problems. For one, during the height of its popularity in the 1950s, comics were labelled as "the devil ... threatening the future of the Philippine nation" (p.128), an "important culprit behind the lack of a reading public in the Philippines", and as "low class", "garbage", or "a handful of ludicrousness and nonsense" (p. 129) by critics. Progress of the industry was also stymied due to strict censorship by the Roman Catholic Church in the 1950s and again in the 1970s during the Martial Law

years under the Marcos administration. And while the enterprising Ramon Roces²⁵ did revive Philippine comics during this era, he also monopolized the industry, killing off the smaller presses that dared to venture into the same business. As Roces passed on, however, so did the success of his comics. Atlas Publishing, the flagship of his chain of comics publishing firms, was sold shortly after his death in 1996. It eventually closed down in 2006.

In more contemporary times, issues present themselves in different forms. Interviewees spoke of inconveniences brought about by local bookstore distribution and the weak buying power of the local market. No longer are local monopolies in existence (so far), but there are other threats. In spite of these, comics in the Philippines are not a lost cause. Jurilla herself acknowledged that while local comics are not anymore regularly found on newsstands, a Filipino comics revival is in the works. In the four themes that emerged from the data, I discuss how those who came after Roces were able to revive a dying industry. Towards the end of this chapter, I propose an update to Robert Darnton's Communications Circuit, introducing a new role for comics publishers, as well as highlighting what they gained from an awareness of Darnton's external factors that influence the life cycle of a book.

I limited my study to independent publishers, as their experiences are also testament to the end of the monopoly of big, commercial presses in comics publishing. In addition, as I am working on niches, the three publishers I have chosen better fit the description of a comics publisher. While I acknowledge

²⁵ Roces built a comics publishing empire in the Philippines, and formed an elite "club" of editors, writers, and artists. As Jurilla called them, these "Roces men" either spent their entire careers or launched their fame under the wing of Roces. Employing the best men, Roces set the standard for local comics during his time, all while keeping prices low through the use of economies of scale (Jurilla, 2008).

that leaving out the bigger presses might lead to a narrower, less generalizable study, such is a trade-off I was willing to sacrifice for rigor and depth. Paolo Herras of Meganon Comics²⁶, Jamie Bautista of Nautilus Comics, and Carljoe Javier of Anino Comics were then enlisted and interviewed. Aside from knowing each other from the comics publishing field, their teaching stints (in well-known universities in the Philippines) also afforded them interaction with one another.

Context on Comics Publishers in the Philippines

I wish to provide context on the three comics publishing companies—Nautilus, Meganon, and Anino. In this section, I was able to do this, but only to a small extent. Perhaps due to the early life of the publishing houses, there is not much information on them in literature and the rest of the public domain²⁷. Meganon does not have an official website, but maintains a Facebook page and an account on Lazada²⁸, where their comics can be purchased. Anino likewise does not have its own website, but has a few minor mentions on the Adarna Publishing House website, of which Anino is an imprint. Nautilus does have an online presence, as an imprint of Chamber Shell Publishing. On their website they state that they carry comics on superheroes, fantasy, science fiction, and action, but focus on topics beyond what is conventional, such as romance, historical fiction, and nonfiction. A few examples of such titles are *Martial Law Babies*, a comic on the generation of Filipinos too young to remember Martial Law, and *Halina Filipina (Let's Go, Filipina)*, an exploration of Filipino

²⁶ In December 2018, Paolo Herras informed me that he is no longer with Meganon. He is unsure whether his previous partner will continue company operations.

²⁷ There is some literature on Nautilus, which is included in the succeeding paragraphs.

²⁸ A popular online shopping platform.

identity between a tourist and a local boy. I chose the three based on a shared criterion—they were comics publishers, and not merely publishers who also made comics, such as the larger Visprint Publishing (makers of the famed *Trese* series, set to have a Netflix television series soon), and Anvil Publishing (of the political satire *Pugad Baboy* series).

The comics publishing niche is also a relatively more volatile one. Comics publishers come and go in a much faster rate than their counterparts²⁹. To remedy these issues, I offer a picture of Philippine comics publishers from the past, similar to those in this study.

I met the three publishers through Doroteo Gerardo “Gerry” N. Alanguilan Jr., comic artist, writer, and publisher of his own and others’ works through his company, Komikero Publishing. I first reached out to Alanguilan for his popularity in the local comics scene, and also because he is considered a credible source on the subject even by notable comics scholar John Lent (2014). Unfortunately, Alanguilan was not available for an interview, but he did, based on his expert opinion, recommend the three publishers in this study.

As Lent (2014) related, Alanguilan documented how budding artists such as himself self-published their own comics in the early 1990s through local photocopying centers. They had small print runs of about a hundred, primarily because this was all they could afford. They leveraged on events such as university fairs, gathering and selling their comics as a group.

FLASHPOINT was published in 1993 by a group of De La Salle University students. It was in full color and on glossy paper, written in English, and

²⁹ Information such as its current offerings, backlist, and history were also sought from the participants. One of them said it was confidential, one gave me an organizational chart of its mother company, while the third one did not respond.

featured characters clad in spandex in the local setting. In 1994, *Alamat* (Legend) Comics, born from such groups, joined a convention open to comics makers in the country. Seven of such groups shared the only two tables provided for them, patiently taking turns in showcasing their materials. That same year, Wilce Portacio, a Filipino working in the US for comics companies, came home and met with group representatives in his home. He urged them not to compete with one another. It was unclear how that admonition turned out. Aside from competition, there were also conflicting views on making Philippine versions of the Japanese manga. While others rendered this as combination of influences, others viewed it as sheer imitation.

Lent (2014) continued to relate that graphic novels emerged in the country in recent years, which he deemed as the “savior” of the industry. He named the works of Arnold Arre³⁰ (*The Mythology Class*, *After Eden*, and *Trip to Tagaytay*), Carlo Vergara (*One Night in Purgatory* and *Ang Kagila-gilalas na Pakikipagsapalaran ni Za Zsa Zaturannah*), and Budjette Tan (*Trese*). Lent (2014) also spoke of Nautilus, particularly on the subject of their award-winning anthologies (*Siglo-Freedom* on the freedom of the Philippines for more than 100 years, and *Siglo: Passion*, which delves on the types of passion and their effect on human lives). Self-publishing spanned the 1990s and continued on to the 2000s. Lent (2014) notes that it was customary for individual creators to set up their own publishing houses, as was the case with Nautilus and Meganon. Naming a few, Lent (2014) cited *Sacred Mountain* by Gilbert Monsanto (which published his own titles, *Rambol* and *Tropa* in 2006), *Komikero Publishing* by Gerry Alanguilan (which published his series of four

³⁰ Artist and part owner of Nautilus Comics.

Elmer comic books), Nautilus (which Lent described as a publishing house with “fewer than a handful of original titles in English for the AB market (p.67)), and Mango Comics³¹. In addition, a few independently published comics also surfaced in the mid-2000s.

Introducing Herras, Bautista, and Javier

As my research requires a deep understanding of the participants, context is set on their educational and professional background in the following paragraphs.

Paolo Herras of Meganon Comiks seems to have been groomed for the creative industry. He went to high school in the prestigious Philippine High School for the Arts and majored in creative writing. In 2003 he completed his bachelor’s degree in comparative literature, major in Philippine literature in the University of the Philippines, a pursued a master’s degree in Philippine Studies, major in film, in the same university the year after. He has built his career on experiences on copywriting, creative directing, film & television directing, and finally, comics publishing.

Jamie Maria Bautista of Nautilus Comics pursued a bachelor’s degree in communication arts in the Ateneo de Manila University, where he graduated cum laude in 1999. He also received a master’s degree in entrepreneurship from the Asian Institute of Management. He taught English literature and comics theory in different schools, colleges, and universities in the Philippines.

Bautista is the creator of *Private Iris*, a 19 issue children’s detective series, *Cast*, a 13 issue young adult series, and was contributing writer and colorist for

³¹ There is also little online presence for Mango Comics. A business list that states its office is located in Makati City, and a short blurb on wiki ComicVine were the top hits.

Siglo, a comics anthology. He also acted in the capacity of a publisher for the latter two. Prior to establishing Nautilus as a comics publishing house in 2003, Bautista initiated the company as a graphic and visual design studio. He worked as a general manager of LSA Printing Press from 2004 to 2010, a small, family-owned enterprise.

Carljoe Javier of Anino Comics is a University of the Philippines alumnus, with a bachelor's degree in English Studies major in Creative Writing (2004), and a master's degree in Creative Writing (2011). He is a regular magazine and web contributor, and has co-written two award-winning films. He has authored eight books on popular culture, edited ten in different subject areas, and has a long list of published works in popular literature. He has been a translator, radio show host, high school teacher, assistant professor in the Department of English and Comparative Literature in the University of the Philippines, an editor, business manager of the University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, and Managing Editor acting as publisher for Anino Comics.

Findings

In this section, the themes that emerged from the data are discussed, particularly, that Filipino comics publishers (1) belong to a close-knit community of creatives and academics; (2) benefit from comic conventions and cult followings; (3) manage to operate with insufficient support from local bookstores, and (4) use various coping strategies in the form of novel roles, products, and distribution systems.

Belongingness to the Creative and Academic Communities

Richard Caves (2002) spoke of a set of intermediaries involved in each creative realm. He recounted that sociologists aptly referred to these intermediaries as “gatekeepers”, as they chose which artists and whose works moved on to the next round of production. According to him, although these people also conducted comics publishing for the sake of advancing the arts, it was inevitable for them to consider profits as well. In the following narratives, I find that in the Philippines, these current gatekeepers are artists themselves who apparently do not meet the standards of bigger, more established publishing houses. As such, these artists established their own companies and became their own publishers. It is hence unsurprising that all three comics publishers professed a belongingness to the creative community. Furthermore, they also belong to the academic community, exhibiting a strong membership in what scholars referred to as “symbolic elites” (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) or the individuals who possess much symbolic capital, for instance, journalists, writers, artists, directors, academics and the like (Van Dijk, 1989).

Herras rendered writing as his entry point to the creative circle. He also worked in advertising for a couple of years—where he met Tepai Pascual, a graphic artist, who eventually became co-founder of Meganon. During his brief stint as a lecturer in the University of the Philippines and the De La Salle University College of Saint Benilde, he saved enough money to direct his own independent films.

Javier is likewise a creative writer. He is a published author of fiction, and had worked in the independent publishing scene for the past few years. He

majored in creative writing, and did his master's thesis on a market study of alternative publishing. He also taught comics writing in the Ateneo de Manila University.

Most entrepreneurial of the three, Jamie Bautista, is a graphic designer by trade whose family owned a printing and publishing house. This allowed him to branch out and start Nautilus Comics on his own. He also had a brief stint teaching comics understanding in the Ateneo de Manila University.

Even after starting publishing, both Herras and Javier had to keep their stints on filmmaking and freelance writing respectively, as their comics earnings could not sustain them financially. Of the three, only Bautista managed to maintain a full-time publishing career.

All three publishers were avid fans of comics prior to publishing them. It was straightforward for Bautista, who had been a fan of comics since he was in grade school, but “became more into it” in high school. The same case was with Javier who noted, “I wound up in the comics industry because I really love comics. I was writing about comics, and I was writing comic strips.” Javier further recounted, “I used to hang out a lot at Sputnik in Cubao X³², comic cons³³ and things. I made a lot of friends with other comics creators, and so I’ve always been wanting to make comics.” Aside from hipster communities and comic cons, Javier also mentioned meeting people whom he collaborated with during the two occasions he taught comic writing classes in the Ateneo. From there he explained that this got him “involved in the scene” of “indie comics creators who are roughly my age or younger than me” and that if you “hang out

³² Sputnik is a small comics and toys shop located in hipster community Cubao X, juxtaposing other eclectic and novelty stores.

³³ Comic conventions.

and you're all creative people you wind up deciding to do projects together.” He also noted that the same people he dealt with years ago became big names in the current local comics publishing arena.

Bautista relayed his teaching experience in the Ateneo, stating, “I taught a comm[unication] class about comics understanding, and then one of my students there was really smart, Elbert Or, who’s also a comic creator now, and we became friends after the class.” Bautista recounted how Or actually challenged him to make their own comics, and with some financial backing from another one of Bautista’s relatives, he put up his own company in 2003.

It is noteworthy that this overlapping of the people who taught, studied, and created comics suggests a niche community who seem to have formed themselves instinctively, reminiscent of Robert’s Escarpit’s cultured group. Escarpit described this group as “persons having received an intellectual training and an aesthetic education advanced enough to enable them to exercise literary and personal judgments, having sufficient time to read, and having enough money to buy books with regularity” (1971, p. 59), forming an exclusive, closed caste within its members, akin to the university publishers. To further strengthen this argument, during the course of the interviews all three mentioned the two other publishers (among other names in the industry). As Bautista disclosed, “...we all know each other. Well, most of the artistic communities here in the Philippines are like that,” reiterating the niche creative community of comics publishers, and the creative industry in general. This is evocative of what many sociologists refer to as networks of informal contracts that bind the creative industry participants together (Caves, 2002).

While the other two met their initial collaborators while teaching them, Herras expounded that collaboration for him came in the form of a “date.” “If I like you, you like me, we can collaborate,” he explained. Being a comics fan was also quite different for Herras, in that he followed the work of certain people. Showing some artwork, he narrated, “...this one is done by Carlo Rozzi Clemente, and I love his work for Darwin's Association for Delicious Evilness which is part of the *Abangan*³⁴, the 2014 best comics [...] I am a fan of his work so I commissioned him to do the [artistic] work [for my writing].” This was strongly reflective of the gatekeeper role performed by Herras, only, he commissioned the artist for his own writing, and not for another author.

Of Comic Conventions and Cult Followings

In this section, I first discuss how this tight-knit community is evident not just in the makers of comics but also among its consumers. After which, I relate how comic conventions are better outlets for sales relative to local bookstores.

Bautista divulged that they had a loyal and dedicated local fan base. He attributed the rise in the number of Philippine comic conventions (as well as their sales figures in such events) to them.

A typical comic convention, like the big *Komikon*³⁵ [which] comes [in] November, typically brings in 3[,000] to 4,000 people for a day. And [in] half [a] day [...] there are times we can hit three fourths of our breakeven point [...] They're the ones who'll [go], 'Oh, here's the new book! He's very good! You should check him out!' They'll give [the books] as gifts [...] It starts there. We, me and my wife, we're saying 'Should we come up with our book launch? No—let's just do it at the convention!' People are there anyway! We don't need to spend money; the booth is only 4,000 Pesos (85 USD). Then there are people who are already fans. They're not going anywhere, [and] I'll go there anyway so might as well just [get a booth].

³⁴ An annual anthology of the best Philippine comics.

³⁵ The annual Philippine comic convention.

This is an efficient way of regaining one's investment in publishing, particularly with a captive market willing to spend on their products. The same positive experience was shared by Javier, who compared sales in these events to his previous book launches.

You know they've moved more copies on the first day of *Komikon* than when we launched the last book I did. ... That's gigantic because when I would launch a literary book, if I sold 40 copies on the night, that's considered very good. And then if comics, a hundred. And then for literary launch[es] today, that's forty in like a personal launch. [And] this is like a hundred copies you're competing with—all of them in *Komikon*. So it's great.

Bautista and Javier's shared enthusiasm for higher sales denotes a stark difference with university publishers, who were relatively less concerned with making money. Herras recounted his first experience in getting a booth in the prestigious Manila International Book Fair (MIBF)—an event for all types of books (comics and non-comics alike), and partnered with other comics aficionados in charge of *Komikon* to broaden the scope of their market. The MIBF booths cost more than the usual comic event booths. As with most monetary investments, there was great risk—but Herras seemed happy that he took it.

We took a leap of faith. We were brave—or stupid—or both. So we printed in time for the Manila International Book Fair and then we did well. We did okay, because it was a big risk for us. The booths were very, very expensive. So we got one booth at the far back, by the stage where nobody wanted [to be], and we're lucky to, to not lose money. We're lucky that we didn't fall into debt. We didn't.

High attendance rates in comics events are not unique to the Philippines. Mowry (2015) described an “explosion of comic book events” (p. 22) in the United Kingdom, with over 10,000 fans flocking to the Granite State Comicon's 13th anniversary in 2015—its largest crowd yet. And from this

event's success spawned other comic conventions in the area, attracting attendees by the thousands as well. Javier revealed that the comics readership in the Philippines was “just gigantic,” as “evidenced by the fact that last year you have one *Komikon*, you have two *Komikets*³⁶, and you had an *Indieket*³⁷ and you have all of these other selling opportunities.”

From these narratives, it can also be easily surmised that comics sales in the Philippines are not lacking. In evaluating highly saleable books, Helgason, Kärrholm, and Steiner (2014) noted that critics tend to look skeptically at bestsellers due to their lowly language, plots, and storylines. For these reasons, critics consider the phenomenon of the bestseller as a threat to literature, a similar concern with regard to the past image of local comics. However, according to contemporary publishers, they are servicing a reader base that belongs to a higher class—economically and even culturally speaking. Javier claimed that there really was a great demand for comics, and the market was quite different from the market in previous decades.

I would probably say our target market, *Anino* fans, are comics fans who are pretty well read in comics. And essentially like my thinking is Filipinos love comics, and we want really good comics. We're willing to buy really bad comics, actually. Because you know if you go to *Komikon*, there's a lot of great comics, there's also a lot of bad comics. People will buy everything because people want comics. People want to support local comics illustrators, and I want to reward that support by like providing really good stories. [...] Because Filipinos, you know, the Filipino comics [reader] wants to read more Filipino authors. It's great because this is an audience that's been built up by *Komikon* for the last ten years, so really like I'm just kind of swooping in and benefitting from the infrastructure that's already been built.

³⁶ Filipino Komiks, Books & Art Market.

³⁷ Independent Market, a mini event of *Komikon*.

From this it can be deduced that the market he was referring to was definitely separate from what Jurilla described as a mass culture who would rent comics for cheap because they were unable to afford a copy for themselves.

So this consumer is, you know, a Filipino comics fan, [...] if you're reading and you can afford a book for 200-250 pesos, you're obviously a little bit better off, that you're not trying to cover your basic [needs]—and then if you're looking at *Anino* comics, then you probably respect that level of comics creation.

“That level” was not explicitly defined by Javier, but from his reference to its relatively higher price point, Javier seems to imply that his customers belong to a more financially privileged background. Thus, they are able to appreciate his “brand” of comics. Javier took pride in serving this niche—a niche that kept sales moving even if it did not belong to mass culture. He claims that theirs is a path outside the mainstream comics (such as superheroes), but also remains aware that his title list might not be as unique as he would like.

We're really trying to do things that are different. Like every single book that we put out is different from anything else that's been put out in the market. In the comics market. And we make a clear, like a tended path. So I'm sure that the other publishers would say the same thing, but it's true like I'm keenly aware of what other publishers are putting out, am keenly aware of the kinds of things I would like to put out. ... When I say it's different and alternative and it's a different level am sure we'll have superhero comics 'cause I love superhero comics, but it's different. And we have manga but it's different. So we're not trying to like fit into other genres and copy them or try and like, obviously we have a view towards what will sell. We don't go on and say, 'What is selling? Let's make something like that.' What we do is, let's make something really good that people would want to buy [it]. And so if that's our thinking then that's also an awareness of our readership. So these are people who want really good comics. And are willing to, you know, support creators by buying the books.

In essence, Javier wanted a book that will sell well, without “succumbing” to the taste of the masses. Jurilla (2008) noted that the concept of “bestsellers” as we know it was an inherently Western model, stating that,

“patterns and trends in the history of Philippine literary publishing would reveal, [that] the local industry has operated in a manner and scale that does not allow for the bestseller phenomenon.” (p. 60). What Jurilla seemed to imply here was that Philippine books were existing in their own bubble—a bubble that was separate from the international market, a bubble that cannot compete with the international spheres of book trade.

However, Javier reckoned that they have already covered the local market. He reasoned that publishers needed to go international to gain from economies of scale, not just for themselves as publishers, but for their authors as well. This perhaps stemmed from him being able to relate as an author himself. As he discussed,

I think local distribution, at least as far as *Anino's* concerned, is very strong but what we need is that larger distribution into regional markets, because once we move into regional markets with scale, and then you can tap these bigger markets. Because it really sucks if we're a nation of what, a hundred million people? And then for you to be a literary bestseller you have to sell 1,500 copies. It's a .005% of the population just to be a bestseller. It's kind of a shit number. You know so if the best you can hope for in a local publishing is 1,500 copies, how much can you sell that for? 150, 300 [Pesos, 3 to 6 USD]? So how much will the author earn from that? Nothing, basically. [...] If we want to be successful, we need to scale, because that scale allows us to sell more copies and it allows us to pay creators better so that they can keep making comics. Because that is the worst thing that people are dealing with, that they have to stop making comics because they have to make a living, 'cause comics doesn't earn enough. So if it breaks down at the point of the creator, how are we gonna sustain an industry?

Herras, in contrast, maintained a local market perspective. This is unsurprising, as Herras is one of the most active organizers of comics events in the country. He deemed it high time that publishers expand their local readership outside of the loyal buyers they currently had. Justifying their decision to get a booth at the MIBF, he said, “... we wanted to promote the

comics event, because [it felt like] it's the same bubble. It's like we were living in a bubble that it's the same readers, same attendees, so we wanted to grow that.”

The publishers did recount many times how they wished to have a wider readership of the comics they publish. Javier, however, compared distribution of comics to that of literary bestsellers, but notably reiterated that there was no contest, as comics were even better performing than what had been traditionally rendered as literary bestsellers.

Basically, you have tens of thousands of people buying comics regularly. When you look at the distribution say of like, what is a literary bestseller? You move a thousand copies in a year. For comics you can move that much quicker. Our first print run of *Light*, which was substantially more than 1000 copies, sold out in a few months. So these move faster. I feel like there's a much wider readership in comic books than in traditional literature, not to say that there isn't a readership [in the latter] but particularly the local, like Filipinos who read Filipino literature, there is a bigger population of Filipinos who read Filipino comics than Filipinos who read Filipino literary work [...] And you don't necessarily have to be a comics fan to buy and read Filipino comics, whereas buying and reading Filipino literature is actually a big step for a lot of people.

While the cheap, mass-market comics likewise moved rather (if not more) quickly in the past, the difference with materials then and now lies in the levels of ephemerality. Comics nowadays are seen as collector's items, but it seems that they still enjoy better sales than other Filipino literature. It appears that comics still enjoy being a “bridging” material between avid and reluctant readers.

Lack of Local Bookstore Support

Aside from the lack of digital distribution systems, there was also clear evidence of a complicated relationship between comics publishers and local

bookstores. Javier used the term “challenge” to describe them, as local books (including comics) were:

...in some forsaken corner, and then it's just badly organized. It doesn't matter which books are these. It's badly organized. You don't know how to find it, [and] when you ask the people, there they're like 'I don't give a fuck!' [The case is like,] 'We [bookstores] need books for distribution,' but bookstore distribution doesn't really take care of the local books.

Although the government claims that the Filipino reader is not partisan to buying foreign materials (NBDB, 2017), it seems that bookstores think otherwise. This management decision, of course, can easily be surmised to have come from their past sales trends and statistics. While of course, this information will likely not be in public domain anytime soon, this still says a lot about the preferences of the Filipino reader, perhaps even more than what a government survey can profess. Javier went on by lamenting, this time as an author, that,

You know it's really weird, I wanted to give somebody a copy of my book ... I couldn't find it in the bookstores. I couldn't find my own book in bookstores—that I just launched recently! Finally, I did manage to find a copy, but you know, it's in one corner, hidden, which is, you know—it's not gonna get found! The random person [who] wanders into the bookstore is not gonna find it. And I don't know what's to be done about that—I've been thinking about what's to be done about that for the last I don't know—ten years? But nothing's changed and there's you know, it's [like there is] this power struggle and it's [the case that] somebody [should be] saying, you know, 'I want to prioritize local books.' Nobody's doing that.

Javier's difficulties in distribution were not limited to unfriendly shelving systems. He also had to deal with the high discounts bookstores demanded from books displayed on their shelves, as well as other issues such as deficiency in government support and the lack of valuation for cultural works such as Filipino comics. While bookstores remain king in terms of distribution, these difficulties call for a number of changes. It would be difficult of course to

change the Filipino reader's purchasing behavior overnight, or to demand improved terms from chain bookstores that are, naturally, aimed at maximize profits. At this juncture, the publisher's best bet would be a shift towards better government policies.

It's so difficult. I mean I'm sure you can dig up in your research how much bookstores get. Right? So when you compare that to you know—how do you sustain a cultural industry? Without say, government support, to subsidize the cost of these things? I know NBDB³⁸ is doing their best. You know there are taxes on the use of paper, things like that, but what we really need is real support because if you leave the market [by] itself, you're screwed! [...] And I'm not saying that we need to be protectionist about it but it needs this concerted effort towards prioritization of Filipino literature in terms of readership, a valuation of that.

Through these words, Javier also demonstrated some knowledge of the external factors that affected the life cycle of the book. This highlights the role played by external factors as mentioned in Robert Darnton's *Communications Circuit* (1982). Herras likewise exhibited the same judgment.

The Philippines isn't set up to be business-conducive to small, medium enterprises. We had a hard time. All of these government agencies give you a hard time. DTI³⁹, BIR⁴⁰, the easiest thing to do is get your ISBN⁴¹.

Javier further bemoaned the current economic conjuncture of the Philippines. Despite his woes, he remains cognizant of the financial situation of most Filipinos, and that books are not part of their basic needs.

I mean, Jesus, 500 Pesos (approximately 10 USD) for a book, is really, really rough. Right? If your salary is like entry level 15[,000, 314 USD], 18,000 [377 USD] so every payday if you spend 500 Pesos [10 USD] for a book, that's quite expensive. And so what's to be done? If it's left to the market? There has to be something.

This "something" was also defined by Javier. If the government or the

³⁸ National Book Development Board.

³⁹ Department of Trade and Industry.

⁴⁰ Bureau of Internal Revenue.

⁴¹ International Standard Book Number.

market would not adjust, the publisher might as well do.

We control the cost of our books. We do not, as best as we can, we don't sell anything above 300 [Pesos, 6 USD], that's our magic price point. *Anino* books are 200, 250, 275 [between 4 to 5 USD], the figure plays around that. And we think that's our reward to the comics reader.

Economically speaking, Herras understood that “the bookstore is, because they're heavily taxed also, their consignment fees are very high.” Culturally speaking though, he still lamented about how local bookstores treated Filipino comics. He related that in National Bookstore,⁴² Filipino comics are placed alongside F. Sionil Jose, a prolific Filipino novel writer. This may suggest that Herras is concerned with competing with more “saleable” local books, despite comics being deemed as faster moving than literature. However, one can also assume that he merely preferred that comics be grouped together, for better leverage as a group. I am more inclined to believe the latter, as his woes continue on the lack of importance given to local comics.

[In] Alabang Town Center—we're behind the freaking wall! We're behind the pillar! That's *Filipiniana*⁴³ ah! [We only have] one shelf! And you can't see [the books]!

He also shared that aside from the unsupportive manner local bookstores dealt with their books, the latter also made it quite difficult to distribute books through them.

Our worst experience is always when it comes to finance or distribution, [and] delivery. It's not easy to carry a heavy box of books and [have to go] through security. [It's like] going through the people in charge who just want to get their day through, right? The finance, not just the collections—that one is to us our—things that we hate to do.

⁴² One of the largest bookstore chains in the Philippines.

⁴³ Books either written by Filipinos or are about the Philippines.

Bautista reiterated Herras' woes on distribution. Their narratives imply that the smaller players, such as themselves, really need to work harder than their more established counterparts.

... like [in] National Bookstore, you don't just bring it to one place and then they distribute. You have to ship to every single branch ... we've been spending the last two weeks distributing our coloring books to every National Bookstore ... that's like 200 branches, you know? And Metro Manila [has] 100. Well [for] provincial [branches] you give it to one then they spread [the copies around], but [in] Metro Manila [you have to bring the books to] every single one, and per branch, you line up, and you wait, and then you submit. So it took us three to four weeks just to [distribute]--and that's just National Bookstore. We still had to deliver to Fully Booked, Powerbooks, and the others.

However, Herras was quick to add that this was what pushed them to establish their own comic conventions. "...that's why we're doing events, because it's very tough [for us]." He added that, "That's what drove us to the 40 plus events. Because we needed to earn it [the money] back." Javier also imparted a higher opinion on comics events. He sees events, book fairs, and book launches as "great opportunities" and that one can bank on the strengths of such events to capture an audience. According to him, those who were not present in these events can still be reached, as when "you post the pictures and then people are like, 'Shit! I wasn't able to go to the event!' and then they go to the bookstore and then they try [to find the books] there."

While the independent publishers were able to penetrate the market, they were still challenged by bigger, more established publishers. These publishers had more established distribution systems, deeper funds, and of course, the benefit of scale. As Bautista explained,

The problem of course we had with ... comics back ... in 2003, 2004, was we were competing with bigger publishers like Summit⁴⁴, who is of course, Robinsons. And because they are part of a bigger company, [they did not have to do] many [of the] things we have to do. Distribution, all that, they of course, that's part of their strength. So those are the barriers to entry, for example, what would cost us a lot of money to distribute to different bookstores, they just ride along with their distribution system for their other goods ...

While underdog stories are not exclusive to comics publishing, the smaller players in the industry are not only disadvantaged in terms of capital, but also in breadth of reach. Many big players such as Summit Media are part of larger conglomerates with operations and networks all over the country. Another problem for Bautista was the lack of awareness on the part of bookstores that comics, according to him, should be classified as books and not as magazines. Such is reflective not only of the lack of awareness in comics studies in academia, but even in the industry. He noted,

And the other thing with the model we were doing is we were going through the magazine channel, which is different from the book channel. Books are different that books have a longer shelf life, while magazines have a 30-day shelf life. And most bookstores, like [in] National Bookstore, if you're part of the magazine rack, after 30 days—we [bookstores] pull you [products] out. We had to talk to them and say this is a comic, it's not like news ... It doesn't get stale! We kinda had to fight about it.

Interestingly, such a setback was used in the past by publishers as a boon rather than a bane. As mentioned, entrepreneurial publishers in the past preferred their comics to be considered as magazines in order to avoid the heavy taxes imposed on publishing books (Jurilla, 2008). It also seems that comics are viewed, ironically by bookstores even, as closer to ephemeral reading materials rather than books that can be collected on one's shelves.

⁴⁴ A publishing company owned by J.G. Summit Holdings, one of the largest conglomerates in the Philippines.

Novel Lessons and Shifting Roles

Bautista, being the entrepreneur that he was, discovered an effective way (at least for Nautilus) of working around such distribution problems. He did his own distribution, and extended the same service to fellow players in the industry, such as small publishers and self-publishing authors.

Usually if you're the author then 15% goes to you, [and] retailers can get anywhere between 45, 50, [or] 35% of their cover [price]. National Bookstore is 40 [per cent]. When we first started [they got] 50%, that's why they have the biggest cut, half of that [cover price] goes to you [bookstore], right? ... And they're the most difficult ones to distribute to ... and then you have also the distributor who will be the one to distribute. They will get another 10 to 15%.

Bautista as an author and publisher was already giving away a huge percentage of his cover price. He needed bookstore distribution. So he decided he could only keep the 10-15 percent from distribution, at least for now. Offering such services to others was a mutually beneficial arrangement, as according to him,

If you are a single author, I don't have time to spend three weeks driving to every single National Bookstore, waiting in line. I'll just give up 10% of my [earnings]. ... So we offer that service ... of distribution to self-publishers. ... We just say that 50%, you remit it to us, when we remit sales to you, we'll give you back 50% of the cover price because the other 50% will go either to the retailers. Whatever's left, we keep.

He relates that this kind of service poses them with very low risk, as they are delivering their own books anyway, and are merely offsetting their overhead costs. He admitted that he learned this technique from an insurance company he used to work with.

While there are no formal courses on publishing in the Philippines, it seems Bautista's experiences and background in business proved to be advantageous for him. It is also worth citing that comics publishers were still willing to experiment and change the way they handled their presses, based on

factors such as their past wins and losses, as well as the evolving market.

Bautista indeed learned a lot from his previous experiences.

Our release schedule's a lot smaller than before, because now we just do two or three books a year at most. We don't have a big [release] ... So what we try to do is, like [for] National Bookstore, now we say, we won't do all the branches anymore. So now based on our [past experience], we know which branches will sell, so we just focus there. So a lot of it now is trying to be very focused also.

Meanwhile, Herras experimented with merchandise, including notebooks and other sundry items. He explained that in events where people would buy impulse items, they created notebooks, and this actually helped them recuperate their losses for a booth in an event where their comics did not sell very well. He also placed stationery items in *Common Room*, an arts supply store, to cater to people who wished to support artists but were not interested in books. Bautista, as with Herras, also tested the adult coloring book market coupled with prose books. He confessed, however, that this did not come without any challenges.

Of course entering new fields like adult coloring books [and] prose, it's so different. For us, we always know that [to do] with comics, with Arnold's stuff or [his] comics. The comic events is [sic] where we make our bread and butter. It helps subsidize a lot of the printing cost. If we launch during a comic event, we can go a long way towards covering our print cost just that weekend, a big chunk, but that adult coloring books, that doesn't sell in that event, or the prose [books] there are no similar events for that, so that's a longer game.

Bautista was not one to lose hope easily though. He claimed that it was merely a venue they have not found yet. He considered it as a challenge, as "each book is kinda different in away" and hopes that prose books will eventually find its version of *Komikon*, where, as he noted, "the fan base is rabid."

Bautista viewed moving towards the e-market as one key solution to their distribution woes, but some of his stakeholders were still adamant to the idea.

Despite his very strong views that the way to go is indeed to convert to digital, Bautista still remained respectful of the wishes and preferences of authors, particularly Arnold Arre, whom he considered as his most sellable author, and also part owner of *Nautilus*. He related that most of their disagreements stem from the shift to digital. Arre, as an artist, has had encounters with plagiarism and copyright infringement. He deemed that there is much more risk of such encroachments if they go digital. Bautista, however, divulged,

I resolve it is that if its Arnolds stuff, we'll do it the traditional way, print, and digital comes into play only in marketing. But when I want to explore digital like creating digital content, then I do it myself. I'll ask for his help maybe but it'll be my IP [intellectual property].

Bautista pointed out that the shift from print to digital comics was based on his own experiences as both a comics creator and as a consumer. Similar to Herras, he has misgivings about bookstores distributing his works as magazines, and that the stores “display it spine out, and if you display them like that, nobody would be able to see them.” For this reason, he turned away from pamphlet type materials that could be misconstrued as serials, and instead made graphic novels in book format.

For his episodic series, which he calls “the old format,” he shifted to digital. He also published them more regularly. Since there is lower overhead cost, he was able to publish such works weekly or even daily, as opposed to the monthly print series he used to have. Bautista further shared that he observed this “shift” through previous experiences of other publishers.

Because around 2000, 2003, that's when the shift happened when *Atlas Comics*, which used to, you know, used to print all that horoscope comics, *Aliwan*, shut down. Well, you know, you used to move millions of copies then suddenly they couldn't anymore. My theory was that, 'cause they were now competing with 50 Peso [approximately 1 USD] DVDs and MP3s. So comics used to be cheap entertainment, but what happens when

you have cheaper entertainment? It becomes just like a commodity. The cheapest wins. And because it's print and you're competing with digital pirated stuff, comics cannot rival those.

He also mentioned the tie-up between Sterling Paper, a local stationery/publishing company, and Carlo J. Caparas, a Filipino comics writer who later directed and produced his own comics-based TV shows and movies. As Caparas tried to bring back the glory days of comics, he still resorted to the same formula—lowbrow, cheap entertainment in print.

He tied up with Sterling in 2008, 2009 ... They tried 'cause he just felt that people just weren't doing it. So he even got a government grant. Sterling invested. Comics were 10 Pesos [0.20 USD] each. And then he got all the old guys, tried to release weekly and he distributed it in the LRT⁴⁵. How long did that last, six months? Then [it] shut down. Nothing. And we were watching [it happen], but I kinda felt that it's not going to work, mainly because his assumptions were, he just thought that, people just weren't trying, or they gave up too soon, but he didn't change anything from the business model. Nothing changed.

Bautista considered the playing field as different from what it was before, and hence publishers cannot play by the same rules, using the same old strategies. From this, it cannot be surmised that the change in target audience should not bear the blame for the dwindling sales of comics, at least compared to its golden era decades ago. It seems that contemporary comics makers are cognizant of the new face of competition, and because of this, they choose to bring their battle elsewhere—far away from the mass market.

Relationships in the Darnton Context

In this section, I relate my findings to Robert Darnton's Communications Circuit. Two important conclusions may be derived, that (1) comics publishers are cognizant of the external forces influencing the life cycle of the book (using

⁴⁵ Light Rail Transit.

such knowledge to their advantage), and that (2) they manage to form a new role for themselves in the circuit—a distributor.

The evidence for the significance of the external forces in the life cycle of the book is further strengthened by the experiences of comics publishers. Not only are these forces evident, but an acknowledgement of these also aids the publishers in the conduct of their professions. Pricing, for instance, is heavily influenced by the economic and social conjuncture of the Philippines. Their awareness of the lack of local bookstore and government support and valuation for local comics also encouraged them to create their own distribution channels.

Another significant addition to Darnton's model is the overlapping roles of the author, publisher, bookseller, and distributor. In the case of Bautista, he, as the creator of comics, also published it under Nautilus, sold them himself in comic conventions, and even created his own distribution arm, not just for his own products, but for others as well. This proved to be a mutually beneficial arrangement, simplifying logistics for other comic creators, and cutting down on Bautista's costs by putting economies of scale into play.

Much like the university publishers, people in the business of comics production are consumers of their own products as well. However, it cannot be assumed that all readers eventually turned into authors, and hence a separate section in the diagram is allocated for this group of individuals.

In light of the findings presented above, the following is deemed more reflective of the current state of contemporary comics publishing in the Philippines:

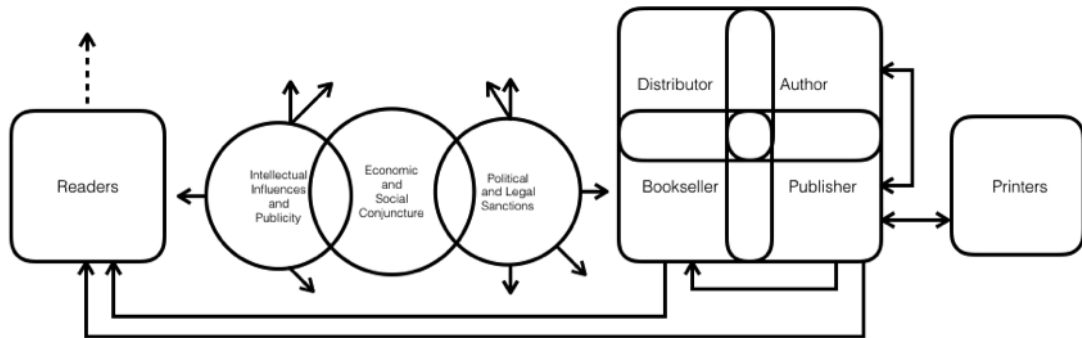


Figure 5. The Communications Circuit from the Standpoint of Philippine Comics Publishers.

Conclusion

Similar to the experiences of Philippine university press publishers, the affiliation of Philippine comics publishers with the creative and academic communities gave weight to their opinions on what is good and bad material particularly in the realm of comics. They also receive their return on investment from comic conventions, having a targeted market come to them instead of the other way around. Some of them saw this as a small bubble that needed to expand— although in different forms. One opinion stated that non-comics readers in the Philippines can and must be reached through other events (outside of comic conventions), while another believed that comics readers in other countries, particularly those in the region, should be pursued. Such a point of view opened the discussion on electronic publishing. However, some are still uncomfortable with the idea, particularly authors, as piracy is rampant in the Philippines.

Local bookstores were portrayed, at best, as an operational nuisance. A lack of patronage is evident from the publisher-unfriendly costs they have to

bear in order to display their books in some “God-forsaken corner” “behind the freaking wall.” However, they also considered that these bookstores might have been heavily taxed by the government, therefore merely passing on the burden to them.

Philippine contemporary comics publishers acknowledge that local distribution may still be improved. They hence took upon this role themselves—some even distributing other fiction and non-fiction books from smaller players (mostly self-publishers) for a fee. This enabled them to benefit from economies of scale, lessening the financial burden of bringing their books to local bookstore branches. Others delved into merchandise such as adult coloring books in order to keep the business afloat. Some looked to new business models, but at this point, specifics are inconclusive.

This chapter provides a new perspective on comics publishing in the Philippines, particularly when compared to the cheap, mass-market image it used to carry. It also opens discussions on electronic publishing, piracy, exploring untapped markets both locally and internationally, among others. But, more importantly, it showcases the value of understanding the external forces that influenced the life cycle of the book. Philippine comics publishers were able to revive what was supposedly a dying industry, something which monopolies and bigger presses of ages past were not able to accomplish. Change, at least in comics publishing, might be coming indeed.

CHAPTER SEVEN **THE PARADOXICAL**
PUBLISHERS: CONTEMPORARY ELECTRONIC SELF-
PUBLISHERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

The supposed demise of the printed book is recurrently discussed in industry debates (Sullivan, 2013; Kottasová, 2017), academic discourse (O'hara & Sellen, 1997; Christianson & Aucoin, 2005; van der Velde & Ernst, 2009), and even popular literature (The National Book Review, 2017). Blamed for this alleged end of print is electronic publishing. In 2014, Wilson contended that e-publishing will radically alter the way texts are produced, distributed, and consumed. He further suggested another serious contender to traditional publishing: self-publishing. In self-publishing, authors are not only involved in the creation of books, but also in the decision-making process related to publishing and in dealing directly with libraries and other book buyers. While the book trade landscape indeed evolved to include the digital since the burst of the dot com bubble, results of this chapter reveal that previous studies greatly underestimated the traditional publisher's will to remain relevant, and exaggerated the ability of authors to rely solely on themselves for publishing. Veering away from this overly technological deterministic perspective, I find that while authors certainly have less barriers to entry for self-publishing due to newer technologies, their hands are still tied by traditional publishers (who most of the time assist them, but on some occasions apparently take advantage of them).

For this thesis, I focus on self-publishers using Wattpad, a Canada-based web application founded in 2006, primarily because of its unusual popularity

and success (relative to similar platforms) in the Philippines. As one interviewee related, “The Philippines is a big deal for them!” and that the CEO even visits from time to time, particularly during the Manila International Book Fair (Esguerra). Despite not having a physical office in the country, Wattpad remains active in the Philippines because of the huge market it provides them.

Wattpad publishing essentially provides authors with a free platform to showcase their work online. Additionally, Wattpad also gives authors the opportunity to be discovered not just by readers, but also by publishers who wish to monetize the author’s large fan base by selling the same popular titles on print. Ramdarshan Bold (2018) reported that 47% of Wattpad writers who were also traditionally published wrote in Filipino, or at least in a mix of Filipino and English, more commonly known as *Taglish*⁴⁶. Wattpad’s popularity in the Philippines is indeed notable, and the company’s founders have travelled to the country to formally grace book launches, local book fairs, and other events.

What makes Wattpad’s success in this context intriguing is that in a developing country such as the Philippines, people are still buying printed materials in spite of the availability of the same titles for free, legally, online. Authors whom I have interviewed for this study shared fanatical remarks from their readers such as, “I skipped a few meals just to be able to buy your book!” (Villanueva). The futile attempts of major publishers in creating similar platforms (such as HarperCollins and Penguin Random House) create further mystery as to how and why traditional publishing in the Philippines melds well with online social writing platforms such as Wattpad (De Kosnik, 2009).

⁴⁶ A combination of the vernacular Tagalog and English.

Furthermore, in a society where piracy is easy and rampant, and where copyright laws are lax, what could have been behind this phenomenon?

I interviewed three Wattpad self-publishers based in the Philippines: Mina V. Esguerra, Noreen Capili, and Kimberly Villanueva. All three agreed to be quoted verbatim, and to be referred to by name. They have all published both on electronic platforms (particularly Wattpad) and on print. They also share the same genre for their works: romance. All three interviewees are females, recruited by means of snowball sampling. Although it might be easy to dismiss this sample as exhibiting gender bias, Baverstock and Steinitz (2013) contended that the realm of self-publishing is female dominated (as opposed to traditional publishing, which is male dominated). Esguerra and Capili have been writing far longer than Villanueva, who is a recent college graduate yet to accumulate the years of working experience that the former two have. Esguerra focuses on writing and homemaking, with most of her time spent taking care of her toddler first, and writing second. Capili is a regular scriptwriter for ABS-CBN, a major network company in the Philippines, while Villanueva works in marketing for a community college owned by her aunt.

In the following paragraphs, I present a review of the extant literature on Wattpad. I also include a description of the application in its current form, bearing in mind that Wattpad is dynamic—it has changed over time and may continue to change. Hence, descriptions of Wattpad in earlier literature may not be accurate and reflective of the application in its current form.

On Wattpad

Davies (2017) described Wattpad as “a community of readers and writers engaging in a process of creative dialogue and collaborative production of a shared commons.” In addition, she noted that Wattpad is a collaborative writing site, with some members creating and circulating value, and with some even exchanging services. This premise is built on the notion that *Wattpadders*⁴⁷ are mostly readers and contributors to stories written by others. She attributed the popularity of the platform to its ease of use and absence of traditional gatekeepers, which meant authors only need to focus on attracting reader attention. Davies also observed that traditional publishing and self-publishing on Wattpad fed off each other. While the value creation model of Wattpad does not fit the traditionally accepted norms in print publishing, Davies noted that the model does facilitate the feedback loop between the audience and the producers. She also gave quite a strong statement in terms of the relationship between these two, stating that “Wattpad readers’ enthusiasm for peer-produced content therefore presents no threat to professional publishing. On the contrary, it offers publishers access to a large audience base and talent pool” (p.51). Davies further explained that the success of Wattpad is testament that a new generation of innovative and influential authors are thriving in the publishing scene.

Ramdarshan Bold (2018) also described Wattpad in a positive light in her netnographic study. One of the key points is how Wattpad democratizes digital reading and writing. Wattpad removes the role of traditional publishers as gatekeepers of books, thus eliminating their power as sole authority over the

⁴⁷ People who joined Wattpad.

documentation and production of culture. Furthermore, it is made possible for authors to have direct access to readers, instead of having to go through traditional publishers.

Marwick and Boyd (2011) evaluated Wattpad less positively. They stressed that rather than collapsing the divisions between known and budding authors, social media actually highlights the existing gap between these two groups. For example, Ramdarshan Bold (2018) contended that some famous authors do not follow or interact with other people in the Wattpad community. She further stressed that a heightened status can also be given by a more popular author to a lesser known one, such as the case of Margaret Atwood partnering with Naomi Alderman. From Ramdarshan Bold's case study, she identified three types of Wattpad authors: (1) published as a result of being on Wattpad, (2) published before joining Wattpad, and (3) unpublished. She found that Wattpad was able to provide a platform for authors who were not initially attractive to traditional publishers, and provided a longer life span for these authors' works.

Description of Wattpad

The following is included in this chapter in order for the reader to be better acquainted with the platform prior to my analysis of its publishers. This is due to the premise that not everyone is familiar to Wattpad. Those who are familiar may skip this section, and proceed to the findings. The Wattpad site was investigated in July 2017.

On the website of Wattpad, the visitor's attention is immediately directed to a daily selection of featured literary genres. These genres are showcased and

rotated every five seconds. Its appealing visuals help spike interest, as is the case for many websites.



Figure 6. Wattpad home page. Retrieved from: <http://wattpad.com>

The simple design and straightforward navigation suggest that the site was built with ease of use in mind—contributing to user satisfaction, and thus greater loyalty (Flavián, Guinalú, & Gurrea, 2006).

On the upper right is an option to change the site language into either English, Filipino, Spanish, Turkish, French, Italian, German, Portuguese, Bahasa Indonesia, or Bahasa Melayu—organized in that particular order. It is reasonable to assume that the order the languages are presented in signals the relative popularity of Wattpad in the different countries. An option to sign up via the viewer’s existing Facebook or Google account (in lieu of a separate sign up under Wattpad) makes access much more convenient.

A “Discover” button is also on the site’s homepage, and a dropdown menu of all genres available on Wattpad listed in alphabetical order: Action,

Adventure, ChickLit, Classics, Fanfiction, Fantasy, General Fiction, Historical Fiction, Horror, Humor, Mystery/Thriller, Non Fiction, Paranormal, Poetry, Random, Romance, Science Fiction, Short Story, Spiritual, Teen Fiction, Vampire, and Werewolf. Under each category are even more subcategories. Interestingly, they were presented as curated “hashtags” in the way currently popular on social media platforms, suggestive of the functionality *hashtagging* can provide, such as findability (Daer, Hoffman, & Goodman, 2014). For instance, hashtags under “Romance” are displayed randomly (neither alphabetically nor by popularity) as follows: #billionaire, #blacklove, #badboyxgoodgirl, #bwwm, #forbiddenlove, #gay, #badboy, #interracial, #lesbian, #LGBT, #love, #mafia, #newadult, #office, #sexy. Clicking on a category or a subcategory brings the visitor to the most popular and latest works under that category, thus increasing the ease of browsing through titles. Alternately, a “Search Stories and People” bar also exists, where viewers can search by keywords.

On the right of the “Discover” button is a “Community” button, which leads viewers to fora and discussion threads written by the community they identified with. Viewers can choose from the following sub-sections: Clubs, The Wattys, Writing Contests, Writers, and #JustWriteIt. This function is indicative of the social features of Wattpad, allowing viewers and users to easily interact with one another. Akin to the Discover subcategories, clicking on “Clubs” brings one to the latest club discussions. On the right hand side of the Clubs page are Specialty Clubs and Categories, where more specialized or specific discussion boards were located, with a short blurb as well as number of members to help guide the visitor.

Wattpad declares that for readers, its function is to provide “stories you’ll love,” and that “if you can’t find exactly what you’re looking for, you have the power to create it yourself.” That is, Wattpad offers its readers the chance to become authors too. Wattpad also claims to function as a redefiner of storytelling as it was popularly known, as it “takes everything you love about storytelling, and turns it into a social, on-the-go experience.” For writers, it claims to provide a “captivated audience,” boasting of a community spending “an incredible 15 billion minutes each month using Wattpad.”

A two-minute video is also embedded on its site, entitled “That Wattpad Moment.” It features a café barista who published her first Wattpad story, attracted a readership, and became, literally overnight, an online celebrity. Such is not all exaggeration or false advertising on the part of Wattpad, as my findings suggest.

Introducing Esguerra, Capili, and Villanueva

As my research requires a deep understanding of the participants, context is set on their educational and professional background in the following paragraphs. I chose them based on the shared criterion that they published both on Wattpad (digitally) and on print, in order that I may be given a picture on how the industry works in both formats.

Kimberly Joy Villanueva received her bachelor’s degree in Business Administration from the Holy Angel University in Angeles City, Pampanga. She quickly jumped to Wattpad fame after graduation, and signed an exclusive writing contract for PopFiction Books of Summit Publishing Company, Inc. She was a Wattpad Filipino Ambassador from 2013-2016, and published five

print books under PopFiction: *The Bet* (2013), *Between Now and Ever After* (2015), *The Bet Extended Edition* (2015), *Maybe Forever* (2016), and *Colliding with Fate* (2017). Her bestselling book, *The Bet*, became a movie with the title, *Just the Way You Are* in 2015. She goes by @ilurvbooks on Wattpad, with 13 digitally published stories on the platform. *The Bet* remains her most read story, with 47.6 million reads as of December 2018.

Noreen Capili has a bachelor's degree in creative writing from the University of the Philippines. She is a blogger, an online columnist, and a teleplay and screenplay writer. Capili is known as @noringai on Wattpad, with five works on the platform. Her most read stories are *My App #Boyfie* with over two million reads, and *Bagito* (Newbie) with close to a million reads. She also published three books with Anvil Publishing, *The Goodbye Girl*, *Buti pa ang Roma may Bagong Papa* (Rome Has It Better, It Has a New Daddy/Pope⁴⁸), and *Parang Kayo pero Hindi* (It Seems You're Together, But You're Not).

Mina V. Esguerra took up AB Communications from the Ateneo de Manila University, and a Master of Development Communication from the University of the Philippines. She is, apart from being an author-publisher, also a trainer on writing and publishing, particularly for romance. She is also president of the communications firm Bronze Age Media, and a development communication consultant. She identifies herself mostly as a homemaker and mother. Esguerra is @MinaVE on Wattpad, with 21 uploaded works. Interestingly, her most read work is the advice column she put up on publishing and self-publishing for writers (close to 400,000 reads).

⁴⁸ *Papa* in Filipino can mean either "Pope" or "Daddy." In this case, it connotes a boyfriend.

Esguerra has three self-published print books, *The Harder We Fall*, *Never Just Friends*, and *Learning to Fall*.

Findings

In this section, I present data and analyses from interviews with Esguerra, Capili, and Villanueva. My participants fall under Ramdarshan Bold's first two categories. Villanueva published traditionally after starting on Wattpad. Esguerra and Capili published prior to joining the platform. It was difficult for me to classify the three interviewees in these three categories, as Esguerra is a self-publisher who published both online and in print, while Capili traditionally published in print, and self-published online. All three of them share this same criterion though: they published on Wattpad and traditionally. This is more helpful for the purposes of my study, as I am looking at relationships in the book trade industry (authors or self-publishers to traditional publishers, other self-publishers, readers), and not merely focusing on authors. Furthermore, I am interested in the phenomenon of stories being sold in print format for a fee despite the presence of a free copy online, in a developing country such as the Philippines. While all three writers have published on both print and digital formats, and as mentioned, Esguerra and Capili having more experience than Esguerra, none of them considered being an author their full time career. According to them, they needed to maintain another job in order to survive.

Four underlying themes emerged from the data: (1) all three authors had varying opinions on Wattpad, depending on whether they had a writing career prior to joining the platform or not; (2) while all three put up their own works on Wattpad, not all of them fit the criteria of being a self-publisher; (3) all three

authors harnessed feedback provided by readers on Wattpad, however, not all feedback was welcome; and (4) despite being considered more successful relative to their peers, the authors still did not see their career in book trade as a steady source of income.

Varying Views on Wattpad

In this section, I describe how the three authors viewed Wattpad. They had varying opinions on the matter, despite belonging to the same community of Wattpad self-publishers. This may be attributed to their writing careers (or lack thereof) pre-Wattpad. Villanueva, for one, was definitely in support of publishing on Wattpad. She claimed that the platform actually improved the reading culture in the Philippines.

Philippine literature really boomed because of Wattpad. Just think about it—students before would be so lazy to read, especially if the books were required materials, like *Ibong Adarna*, *Florante at Laura*, *Noli me Tangere*⁴⁹. They would just read them in order to pass the course. In some cases, they wouldn't even read it. They would just search for the summary. Wattpad really helped the Philippines a lot. People became interested in reading. And just think about it—you're just a student, and you can already publish a book! That adds to the collection in our National Library. And then now there are meet ups, events, gatherings, of booklovers and writers. And we get international recognition—that Filipinos are avid fans of literature. That Filipinos, even though they are still students, can already publish a book!

Here we see that Villanueva views the phenomenon using two lenses—first as a young reader who can relate to students who are merely required to read in school, and second, as a relatively less experienced writer who is given an opportunity to publish a book thanks to Wattpad. Esguerra likewise saw the value of Wattpad, as well as its appeal to non-readers. She also acknowledged

⁴⁹ Books considered as Filipino classics.

that the platform not only attracted a huge audience, but provided an avenue for aspiring writers for their work to be noticed as well.

The role of Wattpad is, I think attracting more people to read, who normally would not read or were turned off by reading or [would get a] nosebleed⁵⁰. They get a nosebleed over what publishers have decided on what you're supposed to read. So, that's their way in.

She, however, was quick to add and speak of certain standards in terms of the books popular Wattpad authors should post online. Esguerra, being an advocate for author rights, states that Wattpad authors have a responsibility of setting standards. However, she says that her efforts often come off as an intention to preach, and that she is seen as an outsider trying to lecture, because she does not belong to the young, inexperienced demographic of Wattpad authors-turned exclusive authors for traditional publishers.

It is significant that not all of them were fans of other authors on Wattpad, as was the case with Capili. Speaking of a popular Wattpad story, she narrated how she found it lacking any quality control.

I read it before it became a movie, and even before it was released on print. And I was turned off already at the first part because [it wrote], "Calling all *freshmens*" and things like that. The spelling, the grammar, they're off. That's one of the reasons why I write in English on Wattpad, to show them, "Kids, this is how [you do it]." Although I know speaking or writing in English is not a gauge of one's intelligence, but you have influence. People get to read your stories. These kids in high school or elementary school read your stories. My friend was telling me there was this story on Wattpad, which was eventually [published traditionally as] a book, and she was reading about the parting of the Red Sea by Noah! But it wasn't Noah who parted the Red Sea... It was Moses, right? But it became a book! So what happens to those who will read it? If they don't know much about religion, they would think that it was indeed Noah! So I'm just appealing to the writers on Wattpad, that just because you have a computer and a Wattpad account [doesn't automatically mean] you can be a writer. It's not enough that you have a story, you have to tell it well!

While it is easy to agree with the statement that spelling, grammar, and

⁵⁰ A Filipino expression for doing too much thinking or using too much brain power.

even facts must be checked, Capili's narrative reflects an elite, somewhat exclusive view of literature. It seems to imply that English is the language of choice for established authors, and that it is a writer's responsibility to use and perpetrate the language because they "have influence."

Capili also mentioned that she did not follow anyone on Wattpad, akin to what Ramdarshan Bold (2018) described as the more popular authors refusing to interact with less established ones. Capili (who was working for major network ABS-CBN, and a National Book Award winner for one of her traditionally published books) certainly fit this category. Capili gives a different reason for this. According to her, she did not follow anyone on Wattpad to protect herself from people accusing her of copying their work. She recognized that it was easy for other people to do this, as there may be overlaps or coincidental similarities in stories. It should be noted, however, that one does not need to follow or subscribe to a certain author, in order to view their work. People who viewed stories also only come as a statistic, and any of the reads might have been Capili. In essence, she may easily be accused of plagiarism whether she follows another's work or not.

On the subject of inexperienced authors, Esguerra took it upon herself to educate the younger authors on Wattpad. She wanted them to be aware of author's rights, hence she published these rights on an advice column on Wattpad, allowing young authors to easily find it. Unfortunately, she disclosed, this came with much opposition.

In that community there would be people who are just stubborn and also have this sense of entitlement, maybe because they were doing the thing that we were saying is wrong and then they still want to defend it. So, on the page where we say, for example, because there was a phase where all these popular Wattpad authors were getting offered publishing contracts

but the contracts were bad. They were not beneficial to the author. It was not an author-friendly contract but they were signing it, they were telling their friends to come join them. So, I tried to tell them ‘You have to be more discerning. You have to ask for certain rights, you shouldn’t just give away your work’. And then of course, there were people who probably wanted to defend their choice. And then they were just being stubborn. I guess that’s the worst experience for me, it’s when you try to be helpful and then people are not understanding that what they did was wrong or [that] they could have done it better.

It is unclear how Esguerra phrased her message to those she wished to inform. However, her Wattpad story, “Publishing and Self-publishing: Advice for Writers,” maintains a friendly tone⁵¹, informally written in *Taglish*,⁵² and begins with the advantages of publishing under a traditional publisher. She then goes on to over one’s copyright and one’s print rights, and how the latter is more protective and beneficial to the author than the former.

In the interview, Esguerra shared that in her dealings with traditional publishers, she only signed print deals. She kept all the rights, and the local publisher did print distribution in the Philippines. It was her wish to have the younger authors on Wattpad to be able to maintain the same rights for their books themselves, but apparently, her advice was not that well received.

Although she maintains that people have the right to be “defensive,” she felt that what they were doing was also detrimental to other aspiring writers.

If you sign a contract where you give away all the rights to your story for several thousand pesos, and now you no longer own the story. And then you’re a famous author in that community, people look up to you... The young people look up to you and then they’ll just do what you did...because they think it’s okay, and they’ll just do as you did. So when we tell them that they might have done the wrong thing and then they just end up defending their decision but not saying that it was wrong. Not telling other people, “Don’t do it the way we did it.” Makes me sad.

⁵¹ Definitely much friendlier than writer Paolo Chikiamco’s *Your Contract Has Horns*, also on Wattpad.

⁵² Mix of Filipino and English, informal.

Esguerra's words are loaded with assumptions, but I will focus on this one: that the authors she attempts to influence are writing for a fair share of royalties. Contrasting this with young, inexperienced Villanueva's point of view, it seems that what is more important to this group is the prestige that comes with publishing, particularly publishing on print, under the wing of a big, established, commercial publisher. It was never mentioned that Esguerra attempted to reach out to traditional publishers offering unfriendly contracts to authors. It seems that the pressure is placed on merely one side of the parties in agreement. It is obvious that Esguerra does not want the practice of indiscriminately giving up author rights as the norm. However, questionable publishing contracts drafted by corporations who well know what they are doing should be probed as well.

The Author as Publisher, the Author with a Publisher

As discussed in an earlier chapter, Darnton enumerated the responsibilities of publishers as follows: drawing up contracts with authors, building alliances with booksellers, negotiating with political authorities, and handling finances, supplies, shipments, and publicity. Based on this list of duties, only Esguerra matched the character of a publisher for both online and print. However, while Esguerra acted as a gatekeeper for her own writing, she adopted a different standard from traditional publishers. She began by asking herself questions such as "Will I publish this?" or "Is this publisher quality?" However, she noted that "publisher quality" did not necessarily mean she will publish. As she explained, "There are very, very popular and very, very well loved stories that are not [that good]...right? Not [at] all publishable in the traditional sense but they capture something." She was quick to add that she

preferred her own gatekeeping skills instead of hiring others to do the job, as she recounted unpleasant experiences from when she engaged the services of professionals. She tried having Facebook ads and hiring people to conduct her marketing online. However, she found that the best way to promote her work is still through recommendations.

The best marketing still would be someone saying that, ‘This is so good. I read this, this is so good!’ and genuinely liking it, so in any case, even on my Wattpad works, every time one my stories gets a boost in reads and followers, it’s because someone trusted by a number of people liked it and recommended it to them. It’s always like that. That’s the trend.

She related that some authors have tried getting “some popular *Pino*y⁵³ celebrity to talk about their book but, but it doesn’t always work.” She finds that people still trust author recommendations more, and that this has “greater effect.” To help her achieve this kind of marketing, Esguerra kept close relations with fellow authors, not just online, but face to face as well. This reiterates the point of Rheingold (2000), that online social interactions in virtual communities may eventually lead to other types of contact. In Esguerra’s case, she formed and maintained online relationships with a community of authors via Wattpad, and met these authors for a series of collaborations during book fairs and other events. One such collaboration was her brainchild, *April Feels Day*, a romance event with a book fair exclusively for romance titles only. She felt that general books events did bring in an audience. However, it was an audience too distracted and overwhelmed by choice, that in the end they end up not buying from their booth.

We noticed that people were coming there but not necessarily buying from us, and then we thought, ‘Let’s experiment and have an event on our own so everyone who comes here is our audience.’ Not something we

⁵³ Slang for Filipino.

were just part of a larger group. That was April Feels Day. We had it in April, we promoted it as a romance event. Everyone who went was a romance reader, so instant [captured market]. And then we sold a lot of books. We had an entrance fee and they paid the entrance fee...200 Pesos. Over 80 attended. And our venue could only sit 30 people. Happy problem. They were sitting on the floor ... That was what's most exciting for us because it was an event and it was all romance. All romance in the community. There were around 20 organizers, all authors.

Similar to the experiences of comics publishers discussed in the previous chapter, Esguerra's event was so successful that she and her peers decided to conduct it annually. While comics events had author signings, Esguerra's group had a different gimmick to attract more readers—and of course, bring in more sales. She hired good looking theater actors to read their books aloud, as “the performance part of it was so effective that people didn't need to have read the book. They actually wanted to buy the book after the performance.”

It can be surmised that Esguerra considered authors as suitable gatekeepers—both for their own works, as well as for the works of others. Esguerra chose what work to publish on Wattpad, and which stories on the platform were good enough for her to collaborate with its author. It is also important to note that among my interviewees, only Esguerra referred to herself as a self-publisher. Villanueva and Capili still viewed themselves only as authors and looked to traditional publishers for conducting publishing roles (as if being an author and a publisher were mutually exclusive). This perhaps can be attributed to the fact that only Esguerra self-published on both print and digital platforms, while the other two only published digitally on Wattpad. Such is telling of a traditional view of publishing and being a publisher among those who conducted such work themselves.

Moreover, Esguerra only signed print deals with local distributors,

keeping all the rights to herself, thus managing to self-publish the same content online. Conversely, Villanueva had all her printed books published traditionally, without self-publishing the exact same content online. Villanueva likewise attended author meet ups and book signings, but it was her traditional publisher that organized all of these events. Villanueva deeply appreciated this, and reported a huge turnout for every single event. She apparently enjoyed heightened social capital through her membership in this social network.

That feeling when you come home, and ask yourself, ‘What have I ever done to deserve such support?’ That’s what makes you keep going to different places. Like if we have a book signing, for example, in Bulacan, Pangasinan, Cebu, Bacolod, Davao, they would really travel far and wide just to see you. Of course, there’s that fear in you that perhaps nobody will show up... then you’ll be surprised that it’s a full house. Especially the *PopFiction* Festival. That one’s really, really [full of people].

Here, the hand of the traditional publisher as described by Darnton may be observed, as they promoted, funded, and negotiated on behalf of Villanueva as an author as well as for her books. The aforementioned places she visited were major cities outside of Metro Manila, requiring considerable funding and manpower to organize such events in far-flung places. Despite the significant resources channeled into organizing such events, Villanueva was well aware that the utmost priority of traditional publishers was still to sell. She narrated how her story was ranked number one on Wattpad in the romance and humor categories back in 2011. This led to PopFiction Books⁵⁴ contacting her about publishing her story in print format. She signed an exclusive writing deal with them, which is one of Esguerra’s frustrations—inexperienced authors seemingly exploited by traditional publishers. One can easily find stories with the most reads by viewing the *What’s Hot* list, where Villanueva’s story was

⁵⁴ PopFiction is an imprint of Summit Publishing Company, owned by J.G. Summit Holdings.

situated at that time. She further provided details on how PopFiction selected their authors.

What Pop Fiction does is they look at the number of reads. My story had around 30 million over followers when they [decided to publish it on print]. Of course, if there is no existing fan base, who will buy the book?

This route is not at all alien to authors. Clark and Phillips (2014) noted that authors now post their content on platforms such as Amazon in hopes of gaining attention from both readers and publishers. Traditional publishers are also well acquainted with this form of author recruitment, allowing market value and appeal to be appraised online prior to signing a deal with an author (Baverstock & Steinitz, 2013). Such is also reflective of what Clark and Phillips (2014) referred to as the polarity of the book trade industry. Though speaking about traditionally published books, their description of publishers' shortlisting only the most saleable authors can also be observed in the current situation on Wattpad. Out of her millions of reads, Villanueva reported that this same story had a 40,000 print run, significantly lower than the millions of Wattpad reads her story garnered. Yet, a 40,000 print run was still huge by Philippine standards or otherwise. "They've reprinted this for so many times, and then there would be a movie edition too." Esguerra likewise confirmed that Wattpad readership did not necessarily translate to the same amount of books that can be sold. "It's not one is to one. It's still a smaller percentage. For instance, a Wattpad story will get 12 million views. It won't sell 12 million books but it will sell like 100,000 because there are still more who read online ... And now that the print book came out, some of them supported it."

This support likewise suggests transcendence from virtual to offline communities as discussed by Rheingold (2000). Villanueva further related how

in two years, she became even more recognized as an author when her work moved from digital to print.

My book was published in 2013... so I was like, 20, 21? I just graduated so I was 20 years old. And then I would think, I just wrote this for myself and then other people were so inspired by it, that they have different perspectives of it. I would cry then because they would bring me letters. And then what's funny is I'm out with a friend and someone would approach you like, 'Ate [older sister in Filipino], aren't you the writer of...?' and they would ask to take a photo with you.

These words from Villanueva reflect that prestige and social capital constitute what is most important to her as an author. They also reiterate the point of Ramdarshan Bold (2018), arguing that virtual communities enabled content to gain popularity despite the lack of name recognition of its author. However, Villanueva experienced her fair share of heartaches from being traditionally published. Unlike Esguerra who self-published even on print, Villanueva was confined to what her traditional publisher dictated.

My original work was 150,000 words. [They told me] it could not be published with that many pages. So what happened was, during the first print run they cut it to 55,000 words. The editor cut some parts out and then she would send the excerpts to me, and I will check if I'm okay with the changes ... Of course, it hurt because I felt like [that book] is my baby, and then a lot of parts were cut. But for the newer version, they published 80,000 words.

It is understandable for someone in this situation to dislike changes made by editors. After all, her work was well loved and well received in its uncut, unedited format. In the end though, she was open to negotiation. This is reflective of the power structure in traditional publishing, that decision of those with the capital outlay outweigh the wishes of the creator. Capili was likewise knowledgeable of such issues dealt with by Wattpad authors, although she tended to side with the traditional publisher on this matter.

I'm not sure about this, I was just told about it, that authors from Wattpad

have a strong sense of ownership of their work. So some of them don't want it to be touched by other people. They don't want it edited or copyedited. So some works get published as is. The thing is, once it's printed already, and you have a lot of copies already, that's the time you realize there are a lot of typo[graphical] errors, grammatical errors, and things like that. Just because they want it untouched. Because you know, if you're a legit[imate] book, you have an editor, you have a proofreader, you should have those ... I myself write in *Taglish* because I'm more comfortable with that. There are others who say they prefer to read English, but if you look at the [Wattpad] authors in English, I'm sorry but they can't even do a simple subject-verb agreement.

While Capili earlier stressed the suitability of using the English language in writing, here she contends that if one is uncomfortable or inadequate in its use, it is better to use the informal *Taglish* instead. She also asserted that "legitimate" books should pass through gatekeepers and quality controllers such as editors and proofreaders, signifying a somehow highbrow view on traditionally published books.

Capili herself is on Wattpad, but what brought her there and what she did there were quite different from Villanueva. Having been published traditionally prior to joining the platform, Capili revealed that she first used Wattpad to market her second book. She further stated that this was her traditional publisher's idea.

I don't have any experience in publishing. I mean, there's the publisher for that. I guess by talking to the publisher and the bosses in ABS-CBN, and their primary goal is really marketing, advertising, and promoting, that I learned [the ins and outs of publishing]. So when my work *My App Boyfie* became a hit and there would be a new soap opera based on it, my boss said start working on the story first on Wattpad even though this is a soap opera, so that you can introduce it [to the public]. Just like [my previous work] *Bagito* (Newbie), I published it on Wattpad first, but for us, internally, we already know the story. So it didn't really start on Wattpad.

Here we see that while Capili used Wattpad, she did not do so in the capacity of a publisher, but rather, under the instruction of one. Her Wattpad

activity—including not just choosing content but also the timing of and use for her posts were still moderated by her traditional publisher. While Capili herself clicked the button to submit her content online, based on Darnton, she cannot be rendered as a self-publisher. Villanueva was a Wattpad publisher but remained traditionally published on print. She enjoyed the freedom to do what she wanted online, but on print, it was an entirely different matter. While her traditional publisher chose her for her online success, the stakes for these publishers became higher when capital outlay, particularly from printing her books, entered the picture. Her traditional publisher made decisions on how many words they published, where she went for book promotion, and so on. From these, it can be understood that although Wattpad is a self-publishing platform, not all who publish on Wattpad may be considered as self-publishers.

The Author and the Reader

In this part of the analysis, I discuss author relations with readers as well as reader preferences and attitudes in purchasing print and electronic books from Wattpad. The interviewees revealed a higher readership for printed materials locally, but a larger percentage of online readers came from outside the Philippines. Villanueva noted that prior to publishing traditionally, most of her audience were actually from overseas.

Back then, when I haven't published [traditionally] yet, all my readers were [readers in] English, international [readers]. I didn't have readers who read in Filipino. Because none of them, I guess they didn't know I was Filipino. On my profile I didn't put my location, and my profile picture was a photo of a book, I think. Then when they found out I was going to publish, that's the only time I had Filipino readers.

The above paragraph denotes a higher local readership potential of Wattpad books published in print, that is, traditionally. As reported by

Villanueva, her Filipino readership on Wattpad only increased after her books came out in print. This confirms the notion that books on print have somehow better quality, or are worth a reader's money. However, this also came with a few challenges, especially when she tried to cater to her foreign readers who wished to purchase the print version (that is, the cut down version), even though the longer Wattpad version was made available online.

Of course, it was challenging for my foreign readers, because it would be hard for them to get a copy if the book is published here [in the Philippines]. That's why it's good that there came the *Buqo*⁵⁵ app.

Despite the availability of a longer and free copy, people still bought Villanueva's books on *Buqo* to show support to the author. Esguerra shared a similar experience. Esguerra published her books for free on Wattpad, but only did so after years of traditionally publishing them or putting them online for a fee. She published her books in electronic format through various channels: Amazon, international distributor Smashwords that distributed the book in iTunes, Kobo, and Barnes and Noble, and just like Villanueva, on *Buqo* as well.

When my books are on Amazon, that means you have to pay using credit card to bill them (readers). Instantly, the Filipino audience drops, and the American audience goes up. So, any book of mine that's on Amazon is most likely being read by someone who is not in the Philippines. In Wattpad, because it is free, the Philippine audience goes [up], and then there is also the presence other audiences. There are some from Russia. One of my stories, there's a significant percentage of visitors from Russia. Well, the characters are American. There is no Russian factor in the story. I don't know. But that's how it's starts—you get recommended by friends [to their friends].

This decline in the number of Filipino readers may be attributed to various factors. First, the Philippines is a developing country with most citizens having limited disposable income. However, from the skyrocketing of the sales

⁵⁵ *Buqo* is a Philippine-based e-bookstore, and it is important to note that books here can be downloaded for a fee, unlike the entirely free content on Wattpad.

of print versions of Wattpad books, this seems to be an illogical inference. Second, the electronic payment system in the Philippines is still not fully developed. In recent years, a number of scams have been reported in relation to credit card fraud⁵⁶. This problem perhaps threw off many from buying a copy of the book online. Third, the relatively low local readership percentage might have been caused by the increase in foreign readership. In essence, it was not that there are no Filipino readers, the number of foreign readers just accounted for most of the group. As Esguerra noted,

In terms of fiction and publishing on Amazon, the interesting thing I learned is that they will read you even if you are not American. Because I still get asked that, did I experience, like, discrimination, that people will not buy my book because I'm *Pinoy*. And that hasn't been the case. That hasn't been the case. I noticed that people still buy, people still buy. I haven't experienced any [discrimination], at least to my face. And I'm the type of author who declares in the author profile that I live in Manila. So, if anything, the whole question of writing as a Filipino is something I talk about with fellow Filipinos because that's our...it seems to be our concern. I haven't been asked about it by people who are not in a way...So the interesting thing I learned is we can write from here or anywhere and be read by anybody.

Fourth, that Filipinos still prefer buying things in print, whenever the print version is available. As Villanueva related,

I myself prefer a hardcopy than an e-book. But you know, technology is evolving so we need to keep up. I guess that's good for people on the go. One click and you can get a copy of the book on your phone. And then there are others who prefer the hard copy because they can display it, and they can lend it. Actually, [I was told] that in a classroom, only one student would buy my book, and then the others would just borrow it, her classmates would borrow it. And then when the book comes back to her, it's in bad shape! But you know, I still feel glad, because that means the book was read.

Esguerra, having self-published in print, also considered preferences of buyers who would rather read on paper. She put in effort to maintain a

⁵⁶ With figures growing significantly in 2016, amounting to over PhP 500 million (approximately USD 9.8 million) in that year alone (de Jesus, 2017).

relationship with print, going as far as nitpicking on the smallest detail such as the type of paper the book was printed on. She ensured the quality of the book even if this translated to higher production costs—and naturally, a higher price for the buyer.

As an author and publisher who also does my own print run, I noticed that when it's us and were financing our own print run, you consider factors such as paper. It's cheaper on say, white paper, something like that. Cream paper, it will be more expensive. What I learned lately is to go with the expensive, because your book buyer would also want a good product. They would understand why you chose cream paper. Even as a publisher, I don't make decisions to cut on costs. I make the decisions to make the experience nice. So there, choice of cover, choice of the finish of the cover, choice of paper. It's all for the good experience and not the cost.

This “cost uncutting” is an interesting phenomenon in the Philippines, particularly since it is a developing country. It can also be assumed that Esguerra is less caught up on profit, and that she is rather more concerned about the experience of the reader interacting with her book. She feels like it is her “responsibility to them [readers], to give them a good book.” She also senses that readers will be more discriminate of the books they buy, and that “they’ll have higher standards in terms of the print, in terms of the paper or the quality of the design.” Although unorthodox, judging by the success of her books (popularity and sales wise), Esguerra’s efforts seem to have paid off. She is, after all, knowledgeable on the advantages of print on demand, and used them to her advantage.

Although publishing on both in paper and online, the ease of use and the lower cash outlay may justify Esguerra’s preference for digital. However, she maintained that one could sell books on both platforms. “That’s one thing that we’re trying to break through [our] books...the idea that you can only sell print.”

She further explained why digital was not her sole platform for publishing.

Some people thought that if my book was an e-book, it won't be available in print. When you're one of my readers, and you prefer paper, I respect it. But it's also a relationship with paper. Not with me. My story is not part of that. That's your own relationship with paper because there are some who read, who buy my books, [in] e-book [format]...but never read the print. And for me, those are the people who have a relationship with the story, not the delivery method of the story. Because over time, I discovered there are people who will really just buy my book wherever it happens to be. So if I release it first on print, they would buy the print [version]. If I release it first [as an e-book] on Amazon, that's what they would buy. That's what I actually like, that they don't care about the format. But there are people who still prefer one format over the other. They are different. So for me, I'm supposed to be giving what they want.

Esguerra appeared to be aware of at least two demographics of her readers: those who read print, those who read digitally, and possibly, even a third demographic, those who read on both platforms. Her own experiences as an author plus her observation of readers' buying and reading behaviors imparted this knowledge, but she also benefitted from statistics she was able to get using digital publishing platforms. She recognized that this is one advantage of this platform over print. Although she had an idea on which bookstores her print books were being sold, she was not privy to who bought it, and how many people are actually reading it. She related,

When Amazon came around, I could tell because I was self-publishing, so I had access to the statistics, like how many people have downloaded this. Or I will do a giveaway and give the book away for free and I know how many downloads [it got]. Just the power of that. And then for Wattpad, it was like that, but public, because we could all see how many reads a story had. It was very visible. So the stats that I loved looking at as a publisher, it was there for the people to see on Wattpad. That's what drew me in.

Esguerra also relayed that at times, these statistics available through Wattpad can be used as a tool to help her censor her work, particularly when she wrote stories with heavy sexual content. She preferred to stay on the safe side when putting out potentially sensational content.

The experience of interacting with Wattpad readers was also positive for Villanueva. She related how she was able to chat with a reader from overseas who was “grandma age.” This reader was converted to reading Wattpad stories by her grandchild. She also shared that her youngest reader is about nine years old, and that the parents had to accompany the child to go to her book signings. Villanueva was able to discover two important demographic elements of her readers: age and location. Despite not explicitly stating it (perhaps, arguably even not being aware of it), Villanueva received instant feedback not just from Wattpad comments but also from face to face communication with her readers. She was also able to assess the span of her readers’ demographic through these encounters.

Capili recounted the same positive experience. While having her Wattpad book released as an afternoon soap opera on national television, she was also able to tweak the story based on feedback given by her Wattpad readers. Major television network ABS-CBN, where she also works as a writer, took her Wattpad stories and converted them to TV shows.

The first one is *My App Boyfie*, starring James [Reid] and Nadine [Lustre]⁵⁷. What happened was, the [release on Wattpad and TV] were almost simultaneous, but parts of the story that weren’t published on Wattpad yet were already screened on TV. Although we try to make it different, because you know, when people have already read the story online, they might not watch the show anymore. So I have the same characters, the same track, the same plot in a way, but I tweak it a bit.

In Capili’s case, she caved to their wishes and demands regarding the flow of the story. She however, reported a few challenges, particularly with writing both the TV script and the Wattpad story simultaneously. She related that “readers can be demanding—like you just updated, and they would post

⁵⁷ Two of the most popular actors on local television as of writing.

and demand, ‘Update, please!’” She narrated how her inbox was “bombed” with messages after three days of not posting anything. While of course this meant interest from readers, it was quite disconcerting for Capili who felt pressure from both the network’s and the Wattpad readers’ sides.

Esguerra, depicting a darker side of it, echoed this sentiment. She, however, did not skew her writing to the wishes of her readers. She went around such a problem by avoiding publishing portions of an unfinished work. She says that authors who do this get “bugged” by persistent followers. Esguerra notes, “I don’t write that way. So usually, when I publish something, it’s complete. It’s done. Nobody gets to see the process.” Here I learn that while Wattpad can help authors gather feedback for their work, in certain occasions some of this feedback was unwelcome.

The Status of the Author in the Philippines

From the previous narratives, we see the glamorous side of Wattpad—of how it seems like an easy way to materialize one’s rags to riches story, and how easy it is to be an author, traditionally published or otherwise, thanks to the platform. After all, Villanueva was able to publish two books in 2015, and was aiming for three more during the time of the interview (2016). Her most popular work was also set to be published in Indonesia, after being translated to Bahasa Indonesia. Capili had been recently awarded a National Book Award, with a couple of bestsellers under her belt. Esguerra had over twenty books in her portfolio and a loyal following. Unfortunately, none of them considered book authorship as their primary career. Esguerra for instance, deemed it more of a hobby than a “real” job.

It's not yet [my source of bread and butter]. I mean, it's small. The way my husband and I talk about it, it's better than interest. It's still better than putting money in the bank and then earning interest. It brings in a little more than that, but it's still not a job.

This is significant, considering that major banks in the Philippines pay only an average of 0.72% interest per annum (*Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas*, 2017). Capili likewise needed to maintain her scriptwriting job at television network ABS-CBN, and Villanueva had to continue her marketing career in her aunt's community college. Despite belonging to the more successful authors in the Philippines, our interviewees related that whatever success Wattpad gave them was still not enough to sustain their day-to-day expenses. As Villanueva disclosed, "The royalty fee is really low. And now if you notice, Wattpad's popularity has been declining." Esguerra however was still happy about what happened on Wattpad, despite not earning a lot.

Well, it was an experiment, [and] I didn't know what would happen. So it was a pleasant surprise that suddenly I got all of these, like, young readers. But they were all asking questions, so I guess, that's one of the interesting developments that so many people want to learn [how to become an author]. This is one of those things that you won't learn in school. That part, how to publish, what to publish, what will work, what won't work, things like that. So they don't teach that.

As mentioned in the previous chapters of this thesis, there are no formal courses on publishing in the Philippines, be it in the tertiary, secondary, or even in alternative learning institutions. Hence, most authors learn the necessary skills to become a self-publisher through experience. Esguerra confirmed that it was a very enriching experience for her, and that she grew as an author thanks to Wattpad.

Because when you self-publish, you also have to market your own books, so I became more active with different activities that would promote the books. And also [things] like speaking, teaching, stuff like that. But, when I have time, I try to do that. I get invited to speak by sometimes schools,

sometimes National Book Development Board, government, literary festivals, among others. I teach creative writing workshops, short ones like three sessions or three to five sessions in the Ayala Museum. That's usually in the summer, and around August, usually I have something like that.

From this, it can be concluded that although not being able to accrue high economic capital in her writing career, Esguerra was able to increase her social capital. In her case, the different bodies and organizations contacting Esguerra had the capacity to turn circumstantial connections into lasting relationships. This in turn made her an authority among authors, which she can use to her advantage. It can be inferred that some success of her events may be attributed to this, in combination with the social capital accrued by the other authors she collaborated with.

Furthermore, she indicated that she really was not in it for the money, at least for now. Esguerra opined that “no one really expects to get anywhere writing novels in this country,” although she is working towards professionalizing it. “Not just me, but others [as well]. We're trying to teach each other how to write better.” She reiterated that this is why she and her fellow authors conduct events, in order to reach more readers, and potential readers of their work. This, according to her, is part of being in the creative industry in the Philippines, akin to what the comics publishers related in the previous chapter. It was not really about the money.

Don't you get that impression that people will write a book and forget about it? Like, they think that they won't really make money out of it. They think that they'll just do it for the sake of doing it. Artists, they fully expect to be starving artists or get a job or something. It seems expected.

This reality of low financial returns for authors is not exclusive to the Philippines, or even to developing countries. Clark and Phillips (2014) reported

that this state of affairs was also true for authors in the United Kingdom. They further detailed that an elite group existed in this setting, such that 10% of their authors earned more than 50% of the total income of the rest of the group, and only 20% of all authors in the UK considered writing as their source of income.

Relationships in the Darnton Context

In this section, I relate my findings to the Communications Circuit by Robert Darnton (1982), as I have done in my previous chapters.

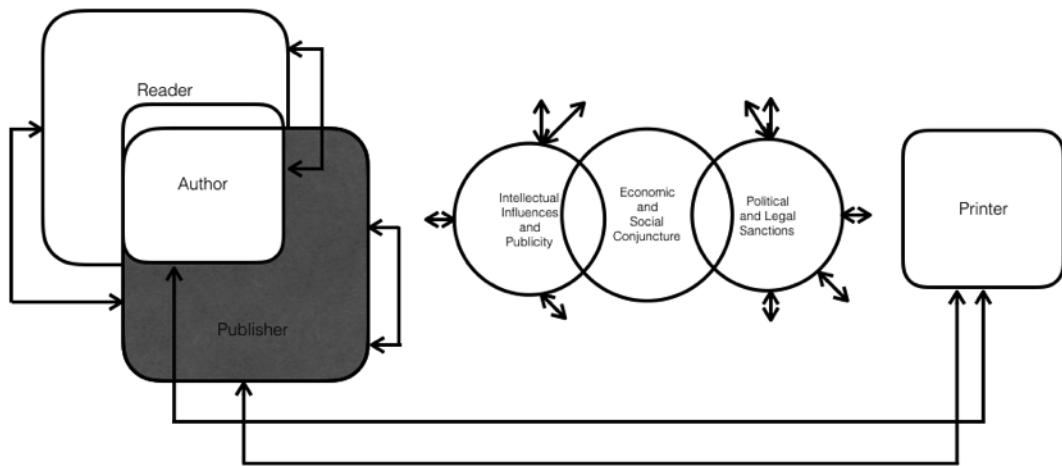


Figure 7. The Communications Circuit from the Standpoint of Wattpad Publishers.

As illustrated above, in my update of Darnton’s model, Wattpad comprises authors who are readers themselves, although it must be stressed that they may or may not read on Wattpad. Some do not read on this specific platform. As mentioned, Villanueva had high regard for other Wattpad stories. Esguerra, in contrast, formed collaborations with other authors of her choosing. She and Capili have also taken it upon themselves to model to younger authors in the platform not only how to write “properly” according to certain “standards”, but also how to protect their rights as authors against abusive

traditional publishers. Capili explicitly refused to read anyone else on Wattpad, in order to protect herself from possible claims of her copying someone else's work.

Being a self-publishing platform, authors on Wattpad are able to put their own works online with just a few clicks. However, I found that not all authors who published on Wattpad are actually self-publishers, as some of them still turn to traditional publishers even for content posted on their Wattpad accounts.

Traditional publishers are also represented in the diagram (shaded). They make use of the platform to identify highly read Wattpad authors and offer these authors publishing deals. Their use of statistics (number of reads) also allow them to predict reader (and thus, buyer) behaviors. They have Wattpad stories converted into what they deem as publishable format (usually with but a fraction of the words in the original online version) and have them sent to printers for production of the printed book version. It should also be noted that traditional publishers still have a strong influence on decision-making. For instance, cutting Villanueva's content, determining when and where her events should be held, and for Capili, even on what she should post on Wattpad. Only Esguerra seemed to have the upper hand in her dealings with publishers, being able to keep some of the rights even though she had signed deals with local publishers.

From their narratives, it can also be surmised that the influence of Darnton's external forces are quite evident in this context. However, these external forces arguably operate quite differently. For one, the economic and social conjuncture of the Philippines should somehow discourage people from buying a printed book they can easily (and legally—thereby freeing them from

sanctions) read for free online. However, authors and traditional publishers countered this by marketing books as something that the author can autograph on during one of the many events held for purposes of increasing sales.

Having considered the above, I find that the external forces, which Darnton rendered as fluid, can not only be exclusive in some occasions, but can also counter the influences of one another.

Conclusion

I opened this chapter with enduring deliberations between print and electronic formats of the book. However, I find that such an exclusive, one or the other point of view is not only gratuitous, but also quite simple-minded. Experiences of Wattpad self-publishers in the Philippines, particularly those published on print after gaining Wattpad popularity are testament to this. We also see that not all authors are created equal—some are able to self-publish both in print and electronically, some just online, and some, despite using platforms such as Wattpad, are still controlled by a traditional publisher. Despite threats of disintermediation of traditional publishers by online publishing platforms (Wattpad being only one of the many), traditional publishers are still able to evolve and carve new roles for themselves. For example, they organize author meet ups, book signings, and other events to improve sales of printed books. Useful features of electronic publishing are also revealed in this chapter—faster author-reader interaction, as well as real-time reports of reader statistics and demographics, which can be useful for censorship (as Esguerra did with her adult content), tweaking stories (as Capili did), or even accruing social capital by feeling good about reader comments (as

experienced by Villanueva). The chapter also notes that not all reader comments are positive, as readers can pressure authors to upload new content immediately. Finally, this chapter reveals the sad state of being an author in the Philippines—that prestigious writing awards, twenty books in your portfolio, or even having your bestselling book made into a blockbuster movie, are not enough for an author to live off writing books alone.

I concluded my previous chapter on comics by reviewing how local publishers were able to trump Darnton's external forces that influenced the life cycle of the book. Despite inadequate government support, low patronage from local bookstores, and the current Philippine setting not being conducive to small and medium enterprises, they were able not just to survive, but to thrive. I attributed their success to their own efforts as they worked on selling opportunities (events), designed new roles for themselves such as distributorship in order to offset expenses, and worked on bringing their materials beyond the Philippine audience.

Unfortunately, I have to close this chapter on a more disconsolate tone. Evidently, Capili, Esguerra, and Villanueva are successful in their craft, in different ways. While it may be argued that they have acquired advantages other than monetary gains (such as social capital), the fact remains that despite being authors who are able to publish their own works and also manage to gain (and sustain) a high and loyal readership both locally and internationally, they are still unable to consider writing or even self-publishing as a career. Unlike comics publishing, human efforts can only go so far for other types of book publishing—at least for now. To become rich, an author must regularly publish and make an international bestseller—something the Philippines has yet to

produce, in spite of the ability to publish in English. Not to mention the industry being trapped in its current economic conjuncture, situated in a developing country with a market not large enough to benefit from economies of scale. So long as these external influences remain strong, being an author in the Philippines will continue to be a hobby, a sideline, or merely an outlet of creativity.

**CHAPTER EIGHT COMING OF AGE:
CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN’S PUBLISHERS IN THE
PHILIPPINES**

Children’s books, like children, are in many cases not taken as seriously as they should be. Using the words of author Ursula Le Guin (1979), “Sure it’s simple, writing for kids. Just as simple as bringing them up” (p.54). In my examination of children’s publishers in the Philippine context, I find that this is true not only for authors but also for those engaged in book trade.

For this chapter, I interviewed Frances Ong of Ilaw ng Tahanan Publishing, Segundo Matias of Lampara Publishing House, and Ani Rosa Almario of Adarna Publishing House. I chose their publishing houses primarily because they produced books in both Filipino and English (Ortiz, 2016), similar to the publishers in my other chapters. The interviews were conducted in their respective workplaces in June of 2016, lasting about 60 to 120 minutes. Almario and Matias own their publishing houses. Tahanan is owned not by Ong, but by another Filipino based in the United States. Unfortunately, the said individual was not available for interview, and passed on the responsibility to Ong, officially the managing editor, who is fulfilling publishing duties anyway.

On Philippine Children’s Publishing

The following paragraphs piece together and make sense of the landscape of Philippine children’s publishing, based on the extant literature.

In her account of Philippine literature for children, notable Filipino author and publisher Ceres Alabado stated that it was not purposely created for a younger audience. Folk literature in the form of stories, poems, and songs

merely found a natural and avid following from Filipino children (Alabado, 2001). Furthermore, due to many regions having their own languages, the practice of translating literature from one vernacular (regional language) to another existed in the Philippines since pre-colonial times. Themes, however, tend to be shared, being mostly about supernatural beings and gods who lord over common folk.

Alabado claimed that the Spanish, American, and Japanese colonial eras were not conducive for children's publishing in the Philippines. She noted that it was so during the Spanish regime primarily due to the Spaniards' focus on production of religious materials for the perpetration of Roman Catholicism. While it is easy to point fingers at the Spaniards for this less than ideal situation, it is important to note that this was not a localized phenomenon. In the past, literature for the young was meant to indoctrinate, reflecting the society's hierarchical treatment of children (Jacobs & Tunnell, 1996). In addition, the Philippines was far from Spain and distribution of books could not have been very easy. Hence, it should not be surprising that not much development took place during those times.

*Doctrina Christiana en Lengua Tagala y Espanola*⁵⁸ the first supposedly children's book in the Philippines, came about in 1593 (Parayano, 1997). However, children were not allowed to handle the book, and had to rely on their religious elders for instruction. Parayano further narrated that around the same time the *Caton* or *Cartilla* came, and was the next children's book to be published. A book on the Roman alphabet and syllables, it became "the Filipino child's first and only book for over three centuries" (p.19). She, however,

⁵⁸ Christian doctrine in Spanish and Tagalog

clarified that it was the elite who had access to textbooks in grammar, arithmetic, and logic. Parayano enumerated more titles that came about in 1606, including the *Memorias de la Vida en Lengua China* (a pamphlet on the lives of saints, prayers, and sermons, written in principal dialects), the *Pasion* (on the life and suffering of Jesus Christ), and *corridos* (metrical tales with local and European heroes).

The Americans, upon their arrival in the 1900s, brought with them English books such as the *Pilgrim's Process*, *Mother Goose Rhymes*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Aesop's Fables*, and *Rip Van Winkle* (Parayano, 1997). While these were in English (for American children), young Filipinos embraced not only the stories but also the attitudes, philosophies, and values that underpinned them. The Americans did not thwart the publishing of folk tales during their colonial rule in the Philippines, but much misrepresentation was involved, as American authors wrote many books for the locals. Filipinos were depicted quite ridiculously, in "loincloths" while wearing "top hats", "posed atop a casco and shoot[ing] at fish with bows and arrows" (Alabado, 2001, p.74). While the American Ginn and Company mostly commissioned American authors for Philippine books⁵⁹, they also began reaching out to local authors in 1916 (Parayano, 1997). Filipino Camilo Osias's *Philippine Readers, Books 1 to 7*⁶⁰ were published in 1920 and became a seminal textbook in the country. More Filipino authors such as Maximo Ramos, Manuel and Lyd Arguilla, and I.V. Mallari followed suit.

⁵⁹ One example is Hugo Miller's popular *Philippine Folklore Stories* in 1904.

⁶⁰ Also known as the *Osias Readers*.

Censorship hindered the presses during the Japanese regime, and hence not much material were produced at that time (Alabado, 2001). However, there was a resurgence of local children's literature after the Second World War. This was the time when Filipinos wrote their own stories, first in English, and eventually, in Filipino. Parayano (1997) also documented the rise of local children's publishers, such as the Philippine Book Company⁶¹ and Bookmark⁶². She also narrated that translation to Filipino and reprinting of foreign books came about in the 1940s, spearheaded by National Bookstore. In addition, Alemar-Phoenix Publishing House also joined the industry⁶³. A company called *Pamana* also published notable children's books in 1962⁶⁴.

The 1970s were a dark phase for children's books in the Philippines, as was the case with the rest of the publishing industry. With the imposition of martial law by then President Ferdinand Marcos in 1972 came strict censorship on all channels of mass media in the country (Jurilla, 2008). And while publishers attempted to fight back by establishing the Book Development Association of the Philippines in 1976, unfriendly government sanctions encouraged importation rather than local production (Jurilla, 2008). This dire situation dragged until the 1980s. However, it was during this time that seeds of future development were being planted. In 1980, Adarna House, the first publishing company devoted exclusively to children's books, was established

⁶¹ Published *All Time Favorite, Fairy Tales in English and in Filipino, The Voyages in Reading Series*.

⁶² Came up with titles such as *Pulanito* by F. Luna, *Ramon Goes to the City* by M.V. Pamintuan, *The Star That was Not* by L. Enriquez, and *Tobie and the Christmas Bell* by M. Yotoko.

⁶³ With titles such as *Myths and Legends of the Early Filipinos* by F.L. Jocano, and *The Old House, The Ginger Girl and Other Stories* by C.V. Pedroche.

⁶⁴ Including titles such as *Makisig: The Little Hero of Mactan* by Gemma Cruz, *Horgle and the King's Soup* by Gilda C. Fernando, *Once Upon a Hilltop* by Isabel Escoda, *Anak Datu* by Abdulmari Imao, and *The Wind Whispered to the Grass* by A. Lo.

(Jurilla, 2008). The year 1984 brought about significant progress to Philippine children's literature, as the Philippine Board of Books for Young People (PBBY) was established (Alabado, 2001). The Board provided some structure to the development and dissemination of children's literature in the country, hence providing aspiring publishers with a guide to conducting their businesses.

The Board had more flexibility for its activities post-Martial Law, sponsoring workshops and various prize-giving events. In addition, Paterno (1994) detailed that the 1990s brought about the Young Minds Bookstore, the first bookstore in the country that specialized only in children's books both from the Philippines and overseas. Similar to the PBBY, the management also established competitions such as its Young Writers' Competition, which encouraged students from both public and private schools in the Philippines to write and illustrate content for children's books (much to the delight of their parents). They championed literacy and love for reading as well. It was also during this time that Cacho Publishing House, Inc. tied up with *Batibot*, a popular children's television show, which gave their books the advantage of title recall from children and parents, helping them boost sales⁶⁵. Cacho also experimented with novel projects during that time, with small books cheaper than a fast food meal, as well as titles with unconventional concepts in storytelling and illustration⁶⁶. Children's publishing truly picked itself up from the ashes during this period.

⁶⁵ Cacho named the books *Aklat Batibot* (Batibot Books), after the TV show. They were thin, affordable, but were with full-color illustrations. (Paterno, 1994)

⁶⁶ Some titles include *The Boy Who Ate Stars* by A. Yuson, illustrated by B. Parrocha, *Two Friends One World*, by R. Sunico, illustrated by J. de Leon, and *Ang Unang Baboy sa Langit* (The First Pig in Heaven) by R. Villanueva, illustrated by I. Crisostomo. (Paterno, 1994)

In his chapter contribution to children's literature sourcebook *Bumasa at Lumaya 2* (Read and Be Free 2), author Eugene Evasco (2016) documented Philippine children's literature from the years 2000 to 2013. He argued that publishers lost some of their bravado in terms of coming up with books that challenged the status quo, so that while local children's books increased in terms of print runs, they decreased in variety. Critics wrote of the "hot *pandesal* mentality" whereby publishers merely copied other works that sold quickly, like *pandesal*⁶⁷. Evasco further relayed that many believed children's books in the Philippines were too "wholesome"⁶⁸. In 2002, the Manila Critics Circle also rendered these books as "lacking in originality"—which was why the Circle did not have a Best Children's Book Award category that year. Evasco concurred that these criticisms were not baseless. Copying of forms, themes, and even the size of the books were common practices. Nevertheless, he also acknowledged that in the world of commercial publishing, such practices are inevitable. It is, after all, still a business enterprise.

However, he also asserted that there existed some novelty in the current production in the types, forms, and contents of children's books in the country. Some books addressed overlooked topics, allowing them to stand out from the crowd. Literary groups focusing on children's poetry were also established, with books discussing the roots of tradition through the use of *bugtong* (riddles), *awiting-bayan* (folk songs), and a few *tulang lansangan* (street poems). Children's books on the protection of children against sexual abuse were also released. The first of such titles was Rene Villanueva's *Ang Batang*

⁶⁷ Filipino bread rolls, usually patronized by the masses.

⁶⁸ This implies a negative connotation in the Philippines, meaning "safe" or "predictable."

Ayaw Gumising (The Child Who Refuses to Wake Up, UNICEF Manila, 1997), a story about child molestation. A few other titles were: *Hoy bata! Mahalaga ka! Sina Biboy at Nina para sa patakaran ng ligtas na paghawak* (Hey kid! You're important! Biboy and Nina on the rules on safe touching, 2006), *Ang Aking Aklat para sa Pansariling Kaligtasan* (My own book for personal protection, 2003) and *Erika and Jay Learn the Touching Rules* (2005), all published by the Center for the Protection and Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse, and *Ang Lihim ni Lea* (Lea's Secret, 2007) published by Adarna House. On the subject of controversial themes, Evasco enumerated a few more titles worth mentioning: *Jamin, Ang Batang Manggagawa* (Jamin, the child laborer, 2001), *Papa's House, Mama's House* (a story about separated parents, 2004), *Ang Ikaklit sa Aming Hardin* (Ikaklit in our garden, on lesbian parenthood, 2012), *Ang Mundo ni Leo* (Leo's World, on a child caught up in the conflict in Mindanao, 2002), and *War Makes Me Sad* (on the peace problems in southern Philippines, 2003). Publishing activities outside Manila were also notable, as smaller presses challenged the canon of the commercial and mainstream publishing houses. Filipino books also started to be published in foreign languages, including *The Spectacular Tree* and *Si Isem sa Bayang Bawal Tumawa* (Isem in the Town Where One Cannot Laugh) both in Tamil, Bahasa, and Mandarin (2004), *Dua Belas Pasang Sepatu* in Bahasa (originally *Sandosenang Sapatos, One Dozen Shoes*, in 2009), *Dukdik, The Pesky Blood Cell* (originally *Si Duglit, Ang Dugong Makulit*) in Thai and English (2010), and *May Mga Lihim Kami ni Ingkong* (Grandpa and I Have Secrets) in Japanese (2011). Such was testament to the ability of local children's books to carry universal themes while boasting high quality writing and illustration.

From these examples, it is evident that local children's publishers were not just recycling conventional themes or merely copying each other's works. Criticisms of children's publishing in the Philippines might instead be a reflection of a higher standard writers set for their colleagues in the industry. However, there is still much room for improvement. For one, Evasco lamented that the development of scholarship and criticism of local children's literature was slow moving. He highlighted that seminars and workshops in the field usually fixated on creative writing and illustrating for children, and that the only current practice of criticism on children's books in the Philippines was the publication of bibliographies.

The local children's publishing industry also seem to have a penchant for grants and awards. Evasco claimed that there were more awards in the Philippines compared to countries with more developed production of children's books. Unfortunately, specific numbers were lacking in his account. Nevertheless, according to him, in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, prestigious awards are given based on the excellence of the book or product published. The case is different in the Philippines. In this context, awards and grants serve as avenues for editors to select manuscripts for publishing. These accolades function as invitations to authors to create good manuscripts, and used by publishers to boost sales. On some occasions, the accolades also spiked interest in lesser-known formats, such as children's poems in English and Filipino at the *Gawad Palanca*⁶⁹ in 2009. There are also competitions, such as the PBBY-Salanga Prize and Romeo Forbes contest,

⁶⁹ Also known as the Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature, one of the most prestigious literary awards in the Philippines.

where the prize was the publication of the manuscript as a book. Some awards such as the National Children's Book Award given by the National Book Development Board and the PBBY acknowledge not only good writing but also good illustration and book design. This award is unique in that proper translation, commendable design, and materials used are included in the selection criteria.

While Parayano, Alabado, Paterno, and Evasco provided informative reviews of the industry, much of the focus was on what publishers did, do, and should do. Their work neglected players' motivations, challenges, and plans for the future.

Alabado's and Evasco's accounts also derived from their own experiences. There was a blatant lack of acknowledgement of sources, particularly scholarly ones. Even though the validity of experiences was difficult to dispute, some claims and statements may have been better presented with sources, such as the awards given out in the United States and the United Kingdom, dates and descriptions of awards given out in the Philippines, and historical accounts of pre-, colonial, and post-colonial children's publishing in the Philippines. However, it must also be said that the martial law experiences of Alabado herself and their first-hand dealings with the players in the industry are valuable sources of information.

Context on Adarna, Tahanan, and Lampara

This section discusses brief backgrounds on the publishing houses, in order that the reader may be provided some context. All three produce books in

both Filipino and English (Ortiz, 2016), and have lengthier histories compared to other children's publishers in the industry.

Adarna was founded in 1980 by Virgilio S. Almario and is now managed by members of his immediate family—his wife Emelina S. Almario (President), and children, Ani Almario (Vice President for Product Development), Asa Montenejo (Vice President for Operations), and Agno Almario (Director for Digital Platforms). They co-own and co-manage The Raya School which caters to pre-school to high school students as well as the Adarna Group Foundation, Inc., a charitable foundation for literacy programs.

Tahanan was incorporated in 1991, and launched its maiden titles in 1992 at the Philippine Book Fair. Since then, it has produced over 150 titles on biographies of Philippine heroes, folk tales, anthologies, educational books, picture books, and books on pop culture. It also has big books and board books targeting younger children. While its main office is in Makati City, Philippines, it also has a satellite office in Seattle, Washington. Their books are sold in North America through their US website and Amazon, while titles are distributed in the Philippines through major bookstores and its local website.

Lampara was born as the imprint Easy to Learn Books in 1997 under the Precious Pages Corporation (established 1992), which specializes in romance pocketbooks in the vernacular. Its success can be traced back to Connect the Dots and Color book, an activity book for pre-school children. Eventually, the founders Segundo Matias, Jr. and Richard Reynante hired an editorial staff and solidified the titles for children's consumption, and thus Lampara Publishing House, Inc. was founded, and eventually became the sister company of

Precious Pages. In 2005 it made its foray into the foreign market by establishing Easy to Learn Sydney, a branch of Lampara in Australia.

Introducing Almario, Ong, and Matias

As my research requires a deep understanding of the participants, context is set on their educational and professional background in the following paragraphs.

Ani Rosa Almario received her bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of the Philippines, graduating cum laude. She was a Fulbright scholar at the Stanford University and took up Master of Arts in Education major in Learning, Design, and Technology. After which, she pursued a PhD in Curriculum Studies from the University of the Philippines. She began her career at accounting firm Sycip, Gorres, and Velayo Co. as a technical staff, and then pursued jobs as reading coordinator, managing editor of *Bulawan*, the Journal of Philippine Culture and Arts, Filipino coordinator for a K-12 language arts team, consultant for *BASA Pilipinas* (READ, Philippines). In 1999 she became Vice President of the Adarna House, Inc., a family-owned enterprise. In 2005, her family founded The Raya School, a progressive school housed in Quezon City and Naga City. Almario is the daughter of National Artist Virgilio Almario, and she has been involved in the education circle in various capacities. She has been Assistant Regional Advisor for Asia and the Pacific for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, Director of the Philippine Fulbright Scholars' Association, President of the Reading Association of the Philippines, President of the Book Development Association of the Philippines, Secretary General at the Philippine Board on Books for

Young People, and serves as Governor to the National Book Development Board during the time of the interview. She has published books on reading and language, and is recipient of numerous awards on being an outstanding Filipino woman.

Frances Ong took up a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of the Philippines. She also pursued a master's degree in Children's and Adolescent Literature from the University of Roehampton in London, United Kingdom. When she moved back to the Philippines, she began her career in Ilaw ng Tahanan Publishing as an editorial assistant. She is now Managing Editor. In 2016 she also began serving as Sectoral Representative for Children's Book Publishers at the Philippine Board on Books for the Young.

Segundo Matias, Jr. holds a bachelor's degree in Mass Communications, major in broadcast from the University of Santo Tomas. He was taking up a master's degree in Creative Writing in the University of the Philippines during the time of the interview. Matias has an extensive list of children's books he authored, and awarded first place for his children's short story, *Alamat ng Duhat* (The Legend of the Black Palm) and third place for his essay, #Paperdolls at the Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature. He has written various screenplays for the local film industry and teleplays for various television shows prior to delving into children's literature. He has also gained much attention for his book, *Mga Batang Poz* (Positive Children), which tackles the rise of HIV cases in the Philippines. Aside from Lampara Books, he also owns Precious Pages Corporation, publisher of the famous romance line, Precious Hearts Romance.

Findings

In this section, I discuss the themes that emerged from the data. Three points are elaborated: (1) that children's publishers in the Philippines do not have a direct path leading to a publishing career, (2) that children's publishers in the Philippines experience varying challenges in dealing with book buyers (with stark differences between institutional and retail markets), and (3) that because of the slow-moving nature of children's books, publishers were able to herald themselves as "the last bastion of print."

Different Paths Leading to Publishing

Almario was trained in economics, but turned out to be an educator. Her family also played a huge role in her career, establishing Adarna Publishing House and The Raya School, and her father being a National Artist for Literature and chairperson for the National Commission for Culture and the Arts in 2007 (NCCA, 2017). Almario pursued a PhD degree in Curriculum Studies, but according to her, this was more for her school management skills than her publishing role. She related that the purpose of her master's degree in the field of education was to gain insight to guide publishing decisions. According to Almario, she "wanted a better view of education, and how it feeds into children book publishing." She explained that when she started working in Adarna, she was "dealing with a lot of reading consultants and teachers", and so she thought they had to speak the same "language".

Segundo Matias, Jr. majored in mass communications but also took up management courses. He acknowledged that management courses helped him operate his publishing houses. He established Precious Pages Corporation with

a partner in 1992, which mainly published romance novels before branching out to children's books under the *Lampara* imprint. His company also publishes classics, translations of popular literature such as *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Twilight*, and even comics. In spite of this, Matias remains level-headed. He shared,

You know I only wanted to publish the Tagalog novels. That's all I wanted to do. But to come this far? No. I don't know, I just did it, and every minute of what I do, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed it. But to say, "Ah, I must be like this," I never had those thoughts, because I'm the type who's easily contented.

Matias worked as a freelance writer for television prior to establishing Precious Pages. After which, he started the company using his savings. He did not take specific courses on publishing, but was taking a master's degree in creative writing at the University of the Philippines at the point of data collection.

Ong took up psychology because it "sounded like the kind of course that will give [her] a lot of options." She thought of taking up human resources, clinical psychology, and medicine. Ironically, publishing did not cross her mind then. She did, however, take a course on creative writing. After finishing her undergraduate program, one of her professors invited her to teach at the Department of English, where she worked as an instructor. She realized back then that "you're not really going anywhere if you remain an instructor forever"⁷⁰ and that "you really need to study." Despite finishing a master's degree in children's and adolescent literature at the University of Roehampton in London, she thought that she needed more advanced degrees in order to be established. It was then that she second-guessed her decision to come to

⁷⁰ Instructors in the Philippines are generally non-tenured.

academia, and wound up in the publishing industry. She has been working at Tahanan from October of 2005 until the time of the interview.

While we can consider the three publishers as formally learned individuals, it must be mentioned that none of them majored in publishing. This perhaps can be attributed to the lack of formal publishing courses in the Philippines, however, two of the three publishers pursued further studies in the United States and the United Kingdom. The success of their publishing houses, however, can attest that a degree in publishing is not a prerequisite to becoming a prosperous publisher of children's books in the Philippines. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the achievements of three individuals may easily be exceptions rather than the norm. For one, they all embody the non-passive image of the Philippine publisher, being involved in various events (such as organizing the annual Philippine Literary Festival, joining the Philippine delegation for the Frankfurt Book Fair, and Almario even serving as President of the Book Development Association of the Philippines). The contrasting point of view could also be that the Philippines could have had a more vibrant industry if more people were formally trained in publishing.

Dealing with book buyers

Darnton (1982) described publishers as gatekeepers that filter "good" material from the "bad," before sending a book out into the market. While it is no secret that children's books are written, published, circulated, reviewed, and, for the most part, bought by adults, it must be noted that this places another set of gatekeepers between the book and the child. Donovan (1991) divided these into institutional (libraries and schools) and mass (retail) markets. He noted that

the key to stable institutional sales for traditional publishers is to have a few titles with good reviews from publications read by book buyers. He mentioned the *Booklist* by the American Library Association, the *School Library Journal*, *The Horn Book Magazine*, and the *Bulletin* of the University of Chicago. While the Philippines does have publications such as the *Bookwatch* of the National Book Development Board, its breadth of reach was not comparable, as print copies were mostly available in Manila, and while digital copies were available online, the latest uploaded issue was from the first quarter of 2015. From the interviews though, it seemed that children's publishers were not doing well in this department. Matias, for one, had undesirable experiences with the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd)⁷¹, claiming that his unsold books were "not even enough supply for the demand," meaning in spite of the great demand in books, DepEd was not buying from them. This is significant, since, as mentioned by Almario, children's publishers in the Philippines did not really do well in retail, and made up for this by selling to the local schools. As Matias narrated,

The main challenge is how to penetrate public schools, because, I cannot call it red tape, but DepEd right now has a moratorium on supplementary materials. They have it on freeze for a while. So, how can we go to the public school? To schools directly? I'm sorry but, I don't know if it's the government [at fault]. I don't know. The children lost their access. If you know how much children there are in Manila, I can say my production is not even enough. For the government, it's not even enough. So that's what frustrates me.

Matias further related how things were going well with the establishment of

⁷¹ According to its website, "the Department of Education (DepEd) formulates, implements, and coordinates policies, plans, programs and projects in the areas of formal and non-formal basic education. It supervises all elementary and secondary education institutions, including alternative learning systems, both public and private; and provides for the establishment and maintenance of a complete, adequate, and integrated system of basic education relevant to the goals of national development" (Department of Education, 2018).

local library hubs. However, the hubs ceased operating two years from the time of the interview (2016), leaving children's books publishers feeling insecure and lost.

The last two years were frustrating for us in terms of distribution in the government. That the children were not given books. Because when they established the Library Hub, I went to Batanes⁷², and I was very happy that our books are there. That the books reached [Batanes]. And then it just suddenly stopped, so that's frustrating. So the challenge here is, what can I do? Should I keep pestering DepEd? I don't own DepEd. And if I go to their office, people might think I'm trying to corrupt them. I don't touch those [things]. I just wait until the call for proposal claim [is announced].

Almario likewise experienced challenges, this time from librarians who were, according to her, adverse to change. Members of her sales group come back to her with comments such as "you already know [who the librarian is]" from a room among administrators and teachers. Resistance to technological products were expected from librarians, and Almario said this is based on experience. She thinks this stems from the fear of being replaced, but to her, "No software can ever replace you!" Instead, she stresses that librarians should see themselves as creators of knowledge, and that they should know about technology. Almario further shared another experience with librarians from accounts of her brother, whom she put in-charge of digital materials for Adarna.

If there's someone who's frowning, he instantly knows that person is the librarian! Isn't it a bad thing? It's like, "What's wrong with you? Aren't you supposed to be excited that, oh, there are other platforms for reading, because that's what you want to promote, right?"

While there are "tech-savvy" librarians, it is still unsurprising that there are many who still match the old stereotype.

Retail accounted for smaller sales, but publishers received better support

⁷² A remote island in the northern tip of the Philippines,

from local book buyers in this market segment. As Ong disclosed,

From time to time, we'll get like a note from our reader that "You know what, I grew up reading your books and now that I have a baby of my own, I want to buy [your books]. I thought you guys were already gone. I also want to buy [for my child]." Small things like that keep you going because there's actual people that care, [that you're] affecting. And if you make a book and you let it out, you don't really see who reads it. It's not like Instagram that you can say "Oh, there are a lot of hits!" You can't really check until somebody takes the time, like some years ago, a woman, she really searched for us. She wrote to us and said, she's based in the States. I think she's an American lady and she found our book called "The Pants", it's based on Francisco Arcellana's story and it's about death. Talking about death in the family. And she said, "You know that book really helped me explain death to my own son because he lost a friend. His friend died just this year."

Such qualitative feedback is indicative of impact, despite the absence of statistics. It is also interesting to note that Ong "measured" support in light of such feedback, instead of citing bestseller lists and high sales figures.

Almario also attempted to penetrate institutions, albeit on a smaller scale than institutional orders, by engaging teachers. Aside from this, they also offered public lectures for school teachers from time to time. Almario related how they strived to maintain consumer relations by conversing with the parents themselves. She stated that they dealt mostly with parents and teachers, as they are the ones who do the buying, not the children, and that is why they make an effort to know this market. She claims that children's publishers deal more with parents and teachers than any other segment of publishing. Ong confirmed this, and added that appealing to both parents and librarians was indeed important for their books to sell. While the government may be difficult to reach, Ong relied on librarians and book reviewers to rally support for her books.

I've always been in children's books. I suppose when you sell a children's book, you're trying to make something that will appeal to the child, but you also have to appeal to the parents. To whatever biases or preferences the parent has, you have to, you know, it's not a conscious

decision, but you have to bear it in mind ... We need a little more help from, say, librarians to tell the parents “Oh, this is okay”, you know... or parents to say “Oh, I’ve kind of...this appeals to me or this is something that I want to teach my kid or this is something I want my kid to read.” Also, book reviewers “Oh, this is good for your child.”

In Ong’s case, librarians were more of friends than foes. Then again, she was promoting books, and not technology.

Matias firmly believed that stories must reach the children in order for them to be knowledgeable of the world around them, and was positive that this can be done through books. However, he was quick to add that support from the local government is necessary.

Don’t deprive children of knowing what’s around them. How? In what way? I don’t know. I just do what I can. I want children to know what’s happening [in the world]. What he needs to know we must let him know. Don’t keep it a secret. That’s one role that I see here. But of course, like what I told you about DepEd, they really need to get the books out there. My god, there are a lot of materials available. And then you receive news that they bought a lot of expensive, imported books. I don’t know if you see such things. I had an experience. I have this book of illustrated classics by Becky Bravo. Iliad, Heidi, things like that. They don’t get them. What they get are the expensive but same books, and the English used is British English. My books use Filipino English. These are the summarized versions of classics, like Frankenstein, things like that. I have good writers! And then I just said to myself... I don’t want to deal with this. It’s difficult to argue with them.

These narratives prove that local publishers have confidence in homegrown talents. It is evident that contemporary publishers are not as affected by the colonial tracings or, as some scholars put it, “ghosts of colonialism” (Rafael, 2000, p.9). By the end of Spanish rule, most Filipinos were converted into Roman Catholics, and there existed a linguistic hierarchy with local languages seen as subordinate to the language of the colonizer, and local signifying conventions (including rituals and animist forms of the spirit) were deemed inferior to the subjects taught by the Spaniards (Rafael, 2000).

Yet today, publishers produce and sustain titles that go against traditional Roman Catholic teachings (such as titles discussing divorce, lesbian parenthood, and conflict in the family), demonstrating a declining influence of the Catholic Church. The publishing industry is a business, and because there are parents open to unconventional themes, there is a market for these titles, at least in retail. However, it seems that the reverse is true for people in positions of (buying) power in the government. One evidence is the partiality to imported materials. This lack of government support was likewise felt by Ong. She explained how, much like the comics publishers, stationery kept them afloat.

It's been going on for a few years [now]. The stationery. We know that our content is very strong. Art-wise, we work with a lot of great illustrators. And it's like a natural thing to expand to stationery. So we thought, you know, we just try it out, let's do this, and then it seems that people actually want to buy them. So it's an extra income stream. It became an extra thing so during the lean years for children's books, when DepEd was not placing orders, the stationery really helped us to keep up our pub[lication] list.

While Ong was confident of their content, she was cognizant of many other factors that might affect sales—in this case, the government having stoppage in book buying. She is also aware of the fact that good books are not enough to keep the business running, and thus she augmented their sales with other merchandise. Matias also commented on the economic situation in the country, and how specific policies could be employed in order to help ease the burden of publishers.

I hope the buying capacity of the Filipino increases so we can make more compelling books ... We can make mock-up books, hardbound [books], expensive-looking ones like the ones in Singapore, stuff like that, because they can afford it ... I hope there would be more good books to be produced. I hope paper gets cheaper. I hope the cost doesn't get higher and higher because sometimes, that's the problem. That's [part of] production. I hope there will come a time that we will have non-imported [materials] because we import everything right now ... I hope like in

Malaysia, because I think they have 30% rebate or less, because they're tax free and it's easier [there]. Here you can also get it tax-free but I didn't really try. I think it takes time. And we don't really import directly. We have dealers who do the dealing for us.

Slowly and Steadily Carrying the Last Bastion of Print

Clark and Phillips (2014) argued that children's publishing, particularly of print books, had insufficient progress. The authors rendered this as a challenge for those in the business. Those in North America and the United Kingdom remedied this by combining trade and educational publishing techniques, as well as incorporating digital supplementary materials to their titles.

In the Philippine context, however, slow-moving children's books are celebrated, allowing publishers to be seen as the last bastion of print. In addition, publishers believe that in spite of the existence of digital materials, print is still a key medium to reaching children. As Almario stressed,

I may be biased but in our industry, for example, in children's books, in our genre, I think we are the last bastion, because it takes a while for us to react. This is because groups like the American Pediatric Association, for example, they still say that you can't hold digital until you're two years old. So before that, print is still what will be given [to children]. We are still what's safe. We are still what can be given to those who are very young. You know how sometimes even if the child is just a few months old, and you can give them a book already because they can eat it. So I think we will be slower to adapt. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't explore [digital] realms. We should still come out with digital stuff for kids. But we shouldn't be doing it because we think that print is dying, [but] because it's a different way of reaching kids.

Ong echoed this point of view, stating that children's publishers "can't be as trendy as the adult market." Comparing her products to romance novels, she clarified, "For them, their turnover is really fast. With us, it is a little slower." Matias, who was cognizant of techniques for both publishing for children and

romance novels, recounted that children's books are "long tail" and that "sales are not that fast," but "even if both of us die already they will still sell." He contrasted his books with those of other (non-children's) publishers, and opined that those popular books will be stale in about twenty years. "Values never get old, if your book is about values. That's the difference," he stressed.

They all shared a penchant for the printed form of the book, though in varying degrees and for different reasons. Matias was quite unhappy seeing children glued to electronic devices.

I don't like seeing [children] on gadgets. I still want them to own the book. It's different, than say, gadgets that have everything. I don't know if I'm traditional or what. I don't know if I'll just be sad about it or if I'll eventually accept that change. But what I can say is, I hope this won't be the case. I don't see any harm in people buying a lot of books and putting them in one's place. I don't think we're running out of space, or perhaps you're living in a condo unit. You can place them there. The old ones, the ones you don't need, you can always give away. How will you give out your gadget? And in the depressed areas, there are no gadgets. So I think we still have to collect the printed versions. Otherwise, what might happen is that, the content, when you put it up on the Internet, anyone can take it for free, just like that. Steal it—we'll use that term. I don't want that to happen. No one would be motivated to write stories if he doesn't get any money from that, right? How can I compute the royalties, for, say, a writer, if the record states ten pieces and the 5,000 pieces have been stolen. Oh my god. The writer and the publisher will both disappear. There's just no motivation anymore

Matias gave a loaded argument, which may be enumerated as having multi-function gadgets that might distract from reading, space being a non-issue, wanting to have an option to give away old books, lower-income areas having less access to gadgets, before finally opening up the discussion on piracy. Here he opined that technology (in this case, e-books) might possibly obliterate the author and publisher from the book trade—but not as disintermediated

characters, but demotivated ones. Although testing the waters for Wattpad⁷³ for his romance novel line, Matias veered away from the platform for his children's publishing arm, primarily because in his opinion "picture books are usually meant to be given." Almario likewise had the same point of view. Her reasons, however, were different from that of Matias.

I'm not sure if you've spoken to Carljoe [Javier of Anino Comics] about Wattpad. Their plan now is, and I don't know if this is a secret, they have a new comic book reading app. And they're convincing us to jump on board ... but I said, I'm not so crazy about Wattpad because I'm scared. There have been many occasions that we have been infringed on Wattpad. There are Adarna stories up there that do not acknowledge us. I even needed someone to check the content.

Ong shared a similar opinion. She was also aware of the different socio-economic segments in the Philippines, given that it is a developing country. Her point of contention was access, particularly because not everyone in the Philippines have access to gadgets. For Ong, there will always be a segment that prefers digital, but there will also be that segment with strong print book consumption. Similar to Almario, she also expressed concern about cognitive disadvantages of having children read through a screen.

While mainstream media claims that the challenge is to go digital, Almario cited a more pressing concern: originality. She also believed that print will remain relevant in the near future.

[The challenge] is to come up with stuff that's original because it's so hard to be original now. There are so many creatives all over the world. It's difficult to find something and not have people say, "Oh, they already did that in Japan," or "They already did that in France." It's also a challenge for me to come up with stuff that's relevant to children now, because the generation of kids right now is pretty different from the generation of kids that Adarna first catered to. So we have to keep ourselves updated all the time. And, we have to know our readers better,

⁷³ An online repository for enthusiasts to share their work. A chapter of this thesis is dedicated to Wattpad.

so I have to do a lot of observation and research. That's a challenge, but it is something that needs to be done. Some people say the challenge is to go digital, but I do not feel [the need] yet. We don't feel something like, "Let's all jump ship [to digital]!" I still feel print will be relevant in the next 15 years. We're not really preparing for its demise.

Relationships in the Darnton Context

In this section, I relate my findings in this chapter to Robert Darnton's Communications Circuit. Three conclusions may be derived from the analysis, (1) that another set of gatekeepers exists between the publisher (and the bookseller) and the reader, (2) that children's publishing transcends the intellectual influences of the Philippines' colonial past, being able to come up with universal themes (which were even celebrated in other countries), having a strong regional publishing profile, with authors writing both in English and Filipino, and (3) that the economic and social conjuncture and political and legal sanctions still plague the industry, with low buying power of Filipinos affecting sales, and government policies⁷⁴ not helping advance the children's book trade.

Given these findings, the following is more reflective of the state of children's publishing in the Philippines, based on Darnton's Communications Circuit:

⁷⁴ Such as the closure of library hubs and lack of patronage for local materials.

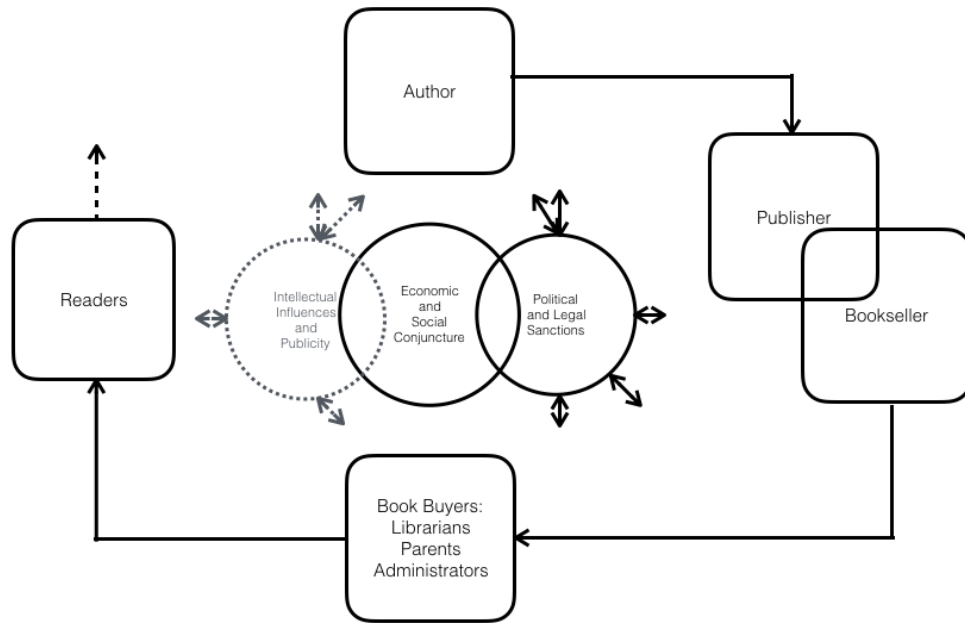


Figure 8. The Communications Circuit from the Standpoint of Philippine Children's Publishers.

The first conclusion extends Darnton's (1982) model, Murray and Squires' (2013) update on Darnton, as well as my own extension of Darnton's model in my previous chapters. I placed the buyer in between the publisher/bookseller and the reader. In this case, librarians, parents, and administrators (including the Department of Education, in the case of the Philippines) fulfill this role. This information can be used in order that publishers can ensure they cater and receive feedback not only from children but also from those who will be purchasing their books. Perhaps, this may even help reconcile the issue of DepEd not purchasing from local publishers.

The second and third conclusions negate Darnton's claim that the external forces influencing the life cycle of the book are actually fluid and should be treated as one entity. It seems that while Darnton rendered his segregation of the three as merely for illustrative purposes, this separation actually has more

value and meaning. For instance, the latter two influences are heavily significant in the Philippine context, while the intellectual influences and publicity are not as strong, leaving publishers with greater room for experimentation in terms of choosing themes, book design, and other matters.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I found that children's publishers in the Philippines are able to act at a relatively slower pace than other types of publishers. For one, there is less pressure for them to adjust to trends (such as the shift to the digital platform). This allows them to explore such realms at their own time. This "leisurely" yet steady pace also influences their distribution systems, in that they sell more to capture markets in Philippine schools than in local and international retail. And while children's publishers in the Philippines cater to the younger generation, the nature of their business necessitates them to sell not only to parents and primary caregivers, but more so to school administrators and librarians. Issues of patronage from the government (or lack thereof) trouble the industry, but the industry is well-supported by retail (parents).

Comparing children's publishers with comics publishers, the longevity of the former is evident in that the main players in the field have been around for decades. The big, commercial comics publishing houses shut down in the 1980s and the early 1990s, as I mentioned in the previous chapter. This left the smaller, younger, and independent presses to pick up from where they left off. Children's publishers particularly have to deal with the current economic condition of the country (for instance, delaying the shift to digital materials

from print), coupled with government policies (such as stoppage of procurement for local schools and libraries) constraining their distribution.

I began this research by posing two questions: (1) What does the contemporary book trade landscape look like, from the perspective of niche publishers in the Philippines?, and (2) How do they operate with the current state of the industry wherein both print and digital materials are in existence? Now that they have been answered, allow me end this manuscript by posing two more: (1) So what?, and (2) What now?

In this final chapter, I summarize my findings based on the first two questions, with emphasis on the relationships between those in the industry in the context of the Communications Circuit. I also attempt to encapsulate similarities and differences, in order that the contributions of my study may be brought to the fore, as a response to the latter two.

My method of choice, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, was crucial to achieving my goal of going around what was already covered by previous work. I was able to observe the phenomenon through the experiences of those currently in the industry, instead of the usual archive exploration conducted by many book historians. IPA is inductive, idiographic, and necessitated a double hermeneutic. The first two characteristics were easily in line with my epistemology, as I naturally gravitate towards methods that build narratives from the ground up. I had the tendency, however, to be overwhelmed by these narratives, and thus a more careful, rigorous approach to making interpretations of the participants' interpretations had to be made. Bridling and external audit were also useful in ensuring awareness of my biases, and that I could manage them.

My work initially focused on publishers and booksellers. However, after review and recommendation from my confirmation panel, I limited the studies to include fewer participants, while adding more depth. This led to a focus solely on publishers. I conducted four studies (presented on Chapters Five to Eight) on the following types of publishers in the Philippines: university (academic), comics, self-, and children's. The selection of these was guided by their "niche-ness," veering away from what was already covered by book historians who came before me (Jurilla, 2008; Totanes, 2012). It is easy to assume that the end, I present a holistic, consolidated Communications Circuit to represent my findings in the Philippine context. However, I in this thesis I offer a better alternative: four separate, independent models that refuse to participate in an oversimplification of the industry.

The Models

In my introduction I mentioned that the term "publisher" has been used interchangeably to suggest a person conducting publishing activities or a publishing house itself, and that I referred to the former. In the following models, the reader is advised to look at the characters in the circuit as individuals acting out responsibilities. The succeeding paragraphs highlight the key differences of each model with the original Communications Circuit, in order that Darnton's model may be tested in this context. Models are, after all, regarded as "a kind of proto-theory, a tentative proposed set of relationships, which can be tested for validity" (Bates, 2005, p.3), and that they are means to opening discourse on a subject of interest. While I discuss below details of similarities and differences between the models, the main takeaway from this is

that realities shift and change, depending on where one stands. Having said this, the models I offer were not created primarily to be applied to other contexts, but to show how Darnton's work contributed to the analyses of my findings.

Philippine University Publishers

A key finding from this study negated the bold assumption from Clark and Phillips (2014) that all players in the circuit are bound to be disintermediated in the future. Philippine university publishers were able to reinforce their role in the circuit by narrating how they moved from print to digital distribution in order to boost sales, but had to revert to producing only print materials and selling the items as a publisher in the physical world. In addition, printers who were once disintermediated from the circuit (when publishers took on their role) have been brought back to the circuit (by bringing back the practice of outsourced printing, which has become more cost-effective for them). It must be said, however, that in the dynamic field of publishing, nothing (including disintermediation and its reversal) may be considered permanent.

It was through this study (the first of the four) that I found that roles in the circuit are not mutually exclusive. As seen in Figure 9, Philippine university publishers can also be authors, writing for the same audience they catered to as publishers and booksellers, as it was customary in the Philippine context for them to have a bookstore appended to their publishing houses.

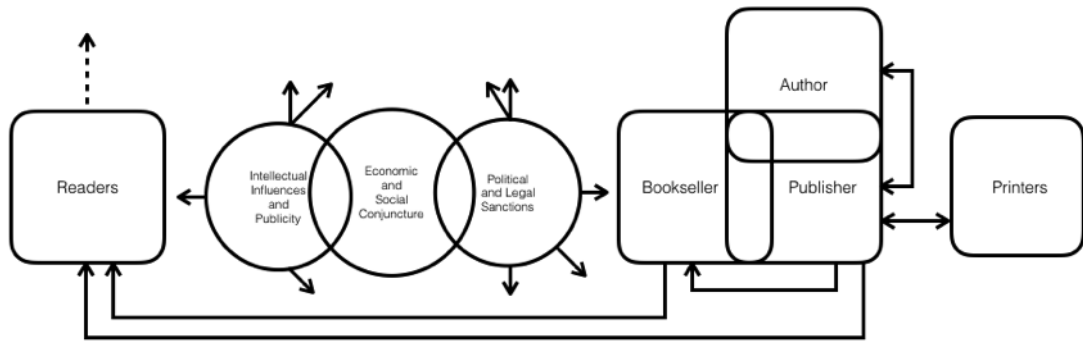


Figure 9. The Communications Circuit from the Standpoint of Philippine University Publishers.

On the subject of fulfilling the role of a bookseller, while they conducted some selling on the side, they also allotted some space for other retailers (such as bookstores and online stores) to distribute their books.

My first study also suggested that although readers faded into authors (as noted by Darnton), this was not the whole story. Indeed, publishers read and used their knowledge of literary works as a major selling point of their credibility. I even labeled them as authors-publishers-once printers-booksellers-readers. Such a “fading” relationship (wherein readers became authors) cannot therefore be attributed only to authors, as this happened to publishers as well. However, at this point it remained inconclusive as to whether readers faded into other kinds of players as well (hence the dotted line).

Philippine Comics Publishers

In Chapter Five, I found that Philippine comics publishers, akin to Philippine university publishers, belong to the closed caste of the cultured group, being academics and creatives themselves. Apart from their teaching, they are also comics creators in different forms (either an author or illustrator,

or both). This similarly gave much weight to their opinion on what is good material and what is not suitable for publishing.

This study also reinforced the overlapping of roles akin to the ones fulfilled by Philippine university publishers. As seen in the figure below, comics publishers also performed the roles of authors and booksellers, while adding another task for themselves: fulfilling the role of a distributor.

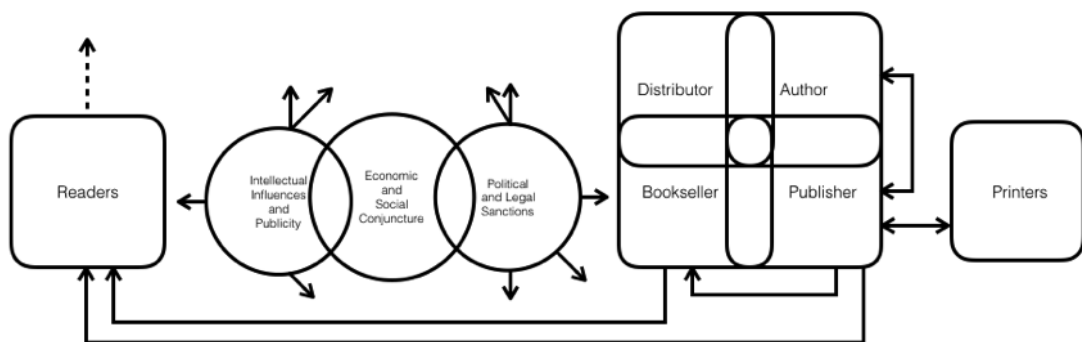


Figure 10. The Communications Circuit from the Standpoint of Philippine Comics Publishers.

It must be mentioned, however, that the carving of such roles was brought about by their need to survive. While Philippine university publishers were considerably neutral in their dealings with local bookstores, Philippine comics publishers felt a lack of patronage from them. They reported publisher-unfriendly costs they had to bear in order to display their books in some “God-forsaken corner” “behind the freaking wall.” Some of them, however, also recognized that these bookstores had to spend a lot of money due to the heavy taxes imposed by the government, and might have merely been passing on their costs to the publishers. However, such taxes for bookstores neither were found

in existing literature, nor were evident in my interviews with the remaining groups of publishers.

Nonetheless, Philippine comics publishers profited from comic conventions and the captive market these events provided. During these events, the book buyers came to the sellers, instead of the other way around. And while they acknowledged that local distribution may still be improved, they proactively extended their role as distributors to bring out not only their own products but also those of other publishers (fiction and non-fiction books, mostly from self-publishers) for a fee. It created a win-win situation, allowing both parties to defray operational costs.

The Philippine comics publishers I interviewed never lacked enterprise, perhaps because there is more at stake (particularly in the financial aspect) for them than for the university publishers. After all, most of those in the former own the publishing house (through their own savings or investments from family members), while of course Philippine university publishers are employed by an educational institution. In addition to comics, they also put out adult coloring books and even prose books to augment sales. These apparently helped subsidize printing costs.

From this chapter, I found that Philippine comics publishers are cognizant of the external forces influencing the life cycle of the book, and they used such knowledge to their advantage. This reinforced the importance of such forces.

However, one thing remained uncertain: to which role did readers fade into, now that the author was a publisher, the publisher was a bookseller, and the bookseller was a distributor?

Philippine Self-Publishers

For self-publishing in the Philippines, I looked at Wattpad for three specific reasons. Firstly, it is a self-publishing application garnering much attention in the Philippines in spite of its Canadian origins. Secondly (and more interestingly), in this specific context, readers are buying the printed versions of books despite being available for free, legally, online. Lastly, I found this a good example of the coexistence of print and digital materials.

Through this chapter I found that not all authors are created equal—some were able to self-publish both on print and electronically, some just online, while some, though using platforms such as Wattpad, were still controlled by a traditional publisher. This changes the image of a self-publisher, regardless if one made use of a self-publishing platform such as Wattpad. The strength of the traditional publisher did not end here. It was evident that in spite of threats of disintermediation from online publishing platforms (Wattpad being only one of the many), traditional publishers were still able to evolve and carve new roles for themselves. Similar to comics publishers, they put together author meet ups, book signings, and other events to improve sales of printed books. In addition, they also made use of the strengths of electronic publishing platforms, such as faster author-reader interaction, as well as real-time reports of reader statistics and demographics.

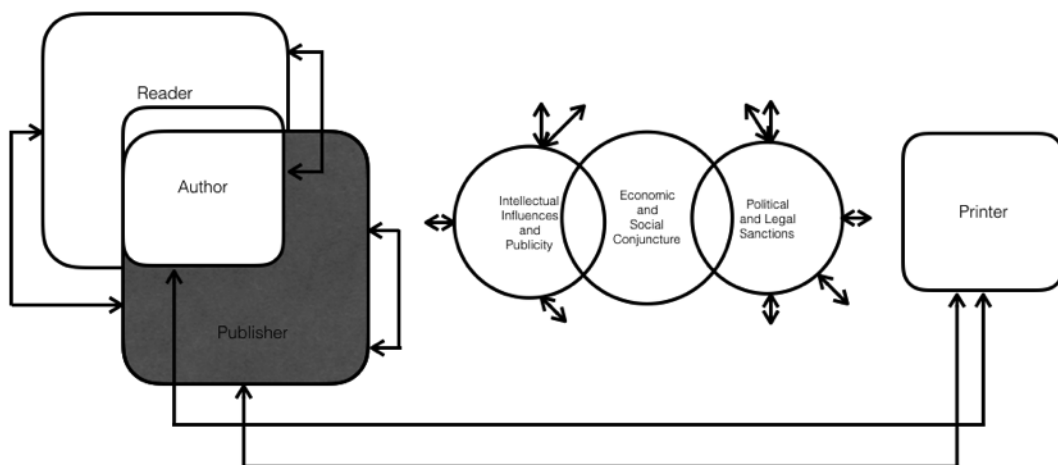


Figure 11. The Communications Circuit from the Standpoint of Wattpad Publishers.

Darnton’s external forces also operated in this context, though in a different manner. The economic and social conjuncture of the Philippines (being a developing country) should somehow discourage people from buying a printed book they can easily (and legally—thereby freeing them from sanctions) read free online. However, authors and traditional publishers countered this by marketing books as an autograph platform, something that the author can sign during one of the many events held for purposes of increasing sales.

In my version, therefore, of Darnton’s Communications Circuit for this chapter, I acknowledged the author-publisher (self-publisher), but also the traditional publisher. While this chapter empowered the traditional publisher, it also revealed the sad state of being an author in the Philippines. Wattpad and print authors Esguerra, Capili, and Villanueva either received prestigious writing awards, had a number of books in their portfolio, or even had some of their books made into television shows and blockbuster movies. These, however, were not enough to allow them to live off writing books alone. They

all had to maintain day jobs because of this harsh reality. Villanueva worked for a tertiary school, Capili maintained her scriptwriting career, and Esguerra, who is a full time mother, deemed it merely a little better than receiving interest from local banks.

Unlike my other chapters where very little was said of readers, a novel finding was discovered in this study. Although it can be said that Wattpad comprised authors who are readers themselves, it must be stressed that they may or may not read on Wattpad. Some, for various reasons, did not read on this specific platform, despite using it as one of their writing outlets.

Philippine Children's Publishers

In my final study, I examined children's book publishers in the Philippines. My results revealed that they did not have a direct path leading to a publishing career. This reiterates the lack of formal education in publishing in the Philippines. I also found that they are able to act at a relatively slower pace than other types of publishers. There was also relatively less pressure for them to adjust to trends (such as the shift to digital platforms), thereby giving them more time and resources for other matters, such as exploring out-of-the-box themes and even book designs and illustrations. Unlike their other counterparts in the industry, Philippine children's publishers have a different set of buyers and readers—the former, parents, teachers, librarians, and administrators, and the latter, children. This added another actor in the life cycle of children's books, thereby extending Darnton's Communications Circuit.

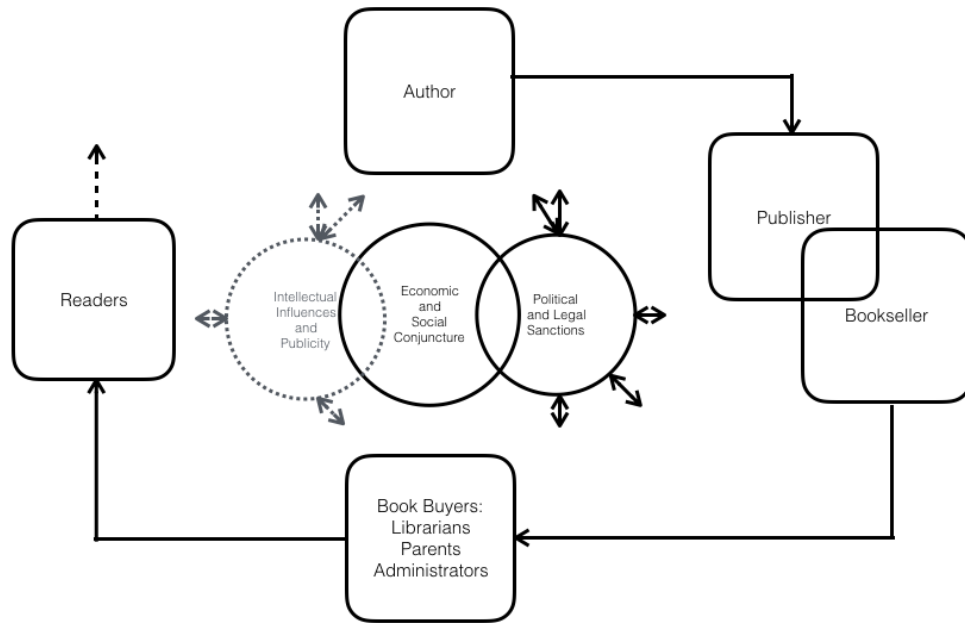


Figure 12. The Communications Circuit from the Standpoint of Philippine Children's Publishers.

I also found that children's publishers have stronger staying capability compared to other players, particularly comics publishers. This is evidenced by the longevity of their companies, as opposed to those in the comics industry from past decades that were forced to close shop. Also, unlike the comics publishers who were crippled with the intellectual influences of the colonial past of the Philippines, children's publishers were plagued with the current economic condition of the country (such as the steep cost for the shift to digital materials for the Philippine buyer) and the political sanctions resulting in unfriendly government policies (such as the stoppage of procurement of books for local schools and libraries). This led to the conclusion that Darnton's claim that the external forces influencing the life cycle of the book comprised a single entity is erroneous. While he maintained that the segregation of the three was merely for illustrative purposes, it seemed that the separation is quite vital. Not

all three were evident or strong in comics publishers, and the same can be said in the case of children's publishers.

Critiques and Contributions

Darnton's model has three underlying characteristics that made it unique: (1) it acknowledges the existence of external forces affecting the industry, (2) it focuses on people involved in the life cycle of a book (in lieu of a product- or process-centric approach), and (3) it aims to introduce order in what he saw as a "tropical rainforest" that is book history. It is a cyclical model starting from when a book comes into being until the moment it spreads into society. However, these same characteristics are points of departure in my critique of Darnton's work. In between critiques, I also offer a summary of my findings.

The External Forces

The Philippines is still a developing country. The Philippine Peso remains weak, with 1 USD amounting to PhP 54.64 towards the end of 2018.⁷⁵ The Philippine book trade, perhaps is not as poor, but accounts for a mere diminutive share of the country's income due to weak industry performance in the past twenty years (BDAP, 2015), although some of the blame is shared by the Asian economic crisis in the late 1990s (Jurilla, 2008). Most Filipinos are willing to spend no more than PhP 199 [USD 3.76] for a book (NBDB, 2017). This is actually quite liberal, given that the minimum wage is only at PhP 537.⁷⁶ It must be said, however, that a book buyer does not necessarily translate to that

⁷⁵ December 2018 data.

⁷⁶ Effective November 22, 2018 on the National Capital Region, the region with the highest wages (and cost of living) in the country, according to the Department of Labor and Employment website <http://www.nwpc.dole.gov.ph/pages/ncr/cmwr.html>

of a reader. As I found in my chapter on children's publishing, parents and school administrators do the purchasing, thus performing a gatekeeping role. This poses the need for a deep understanding of both markets on the part of the publisher, since they have to cater to both demographics.

In my study on comics publishers I found that they try to control the cost of their books. Some place their pricing below the USD 6 mark, in order to “reward” their reader. However, a children's publisher also mentioned hopes of strengthening the purchasing power of the Filipino. He says this has been a barrier to them as publishers, as they are unable to make expensive quality books like their more developed neighbors. Lamentations on the rising cost of paper, reliance on imports, and lack of rebates or tax incentives from the government were also raised. There is, however, another interesting aspect of this phenomenon. The economic and social conjuncture of the Philippines (being a developing country) should discourage people from buying a printed book they can easily (and legally—thereby freeing them from sanctions) read for free online. However, authors and traditional publishers countered this by marketing books as an autograph platform, something that the author can sign during one of the many events held for purposes of increasing sales, as I found in my chapter on self-publishers.

The government has to a certain extent protected the book trade, with mandates such as the Republic Act No. 1425 requiring the two monumental Rizal books as school readings, Republic Act No. 8293 protecting intellectual property, and Republic Act No. 9047, otherwise known as the Book Publishing Industry Development Act. However, it seems that enacting laws is not enough. There has been some clamor for better support for local books, as even the

library hubs set up by the government seem to import more books from overseas, when the local supply can very well meet the demand, as I found in my children's publisher chapter.

A huge part of the financial struggle of publishers is the unfriendly terms given by bookstores. Apart from large cuts from their revenue, it appears that bookstores award prime retail space to foreign books. Comics publishers reported publisher-unfriendly costs they had to bear in order to display their books in some "God-forsaken corner" "behind the freaking wall." Some of them, however, also recognized that these bookstores had to spend a lot of money due to the heavy taxes imposed by the government, and might have merely been passing on their costs to the publishers. However, such taxes for bookstores neither were found in existing literature, nor were evident in my interviews with the remaining publishers.

While the latest government readership survey reveals that Filipinos are impartial to foreign or local books (NBDB, 2017), the management decisions of bookstores reveal otherwise. It is logical to assume that primacy will be placed on books that sell more (in this case, foreign books). They are, after all, running a business. At this juncture it is unclear whether this is a postcolonial mindset of the Philippine buyer. After all, English still seems to have superiority, even in local materials, as an author may be given more authority if they write in Standard English, as I found in my chapter on self-publishers. It may also be that imported books do look better, and thus have more appeal to the buyer. While the same chapter on self-publishers revealed that authors who do their own print runs can choose better, more expensive paper, those who are

traditionally published are still bound by cost-cutting measures of the big, commercial presses. This implies that not all self-publishers are created equal.

On the subject of sales, is it really within the job scope of publishers to make money? Here in my work I found the answer to be yes and no. Publishing constitutes a duality of roles, a cultural and a commercial one. As I found on my chapter on university publishers, with less pressure to make money, a publisher is more able to concentrate on being a cultural gatekeeper. There seems to be conflicting viewpoints on this matter among self-publishers, as some of them are more after the prestige than having a fair share of the royalties. This exasperates those who wish to “professionalize” the industry, as they are concerned about this becoming a precedent for future author-publisher relations. Children’s and comics publishers seem to be in agreement on this one—fulfilling the commercial role allows you to keep performing your cultural responsibilities. In other words, without continued sales, there will be no incentive to create.

Many of the publishers in this thesis belong to the learned elite group of academics and creatives. However, it is important to note that they have learned the ropes of publishing in unorthodox ways, primarily due to the lack of formal courses in publishing in the Philippines. In my chapter on university publishers, I compared those in the local scene to their counterparts in the United States who are given more formal training. It seems that in the Philippines, it is more customary to have an informal mentorship succession, to bring in business acumen acquired from other experiences, or given responsibility that forced some to adapt, as I have found in the case of university publishers.

Events were crucial in survival, as I have discovered from the narratives of comics publishers and self-publishers. It must be noted though, that events are more effective if they are specific. For instance, comic conventions and romance events for self-published romance books generate better sales and a more engaged audience than the bigger, more general book fairs in the country. Merchandise seemed to work for comics and children's publishers as well. When book sales dwindled, sundry items kept their businesses afloat.

While my studies did verify that external forces affected the life cycle of a book, Darnton claimed that these forces were actually a single entity, commingling with one another, and that the partitions are for visual representation only. I confirm that this is partly true in the Philippine setting, as there were overlaps in the intellectual influences and publicity, the economic and social conjuncture, and the political and legal sanctions. However, this was not always the case.

As I found in my studies, some of these influences are stronger in certain contexts than others, and that in some occasions, only two of the three are significantly observed. It would have been better if Darnton eliminated the stipulation of the external forces being a collective unit, and instead maintained that the size of the characters and the forces in the model do not necessarily reflect their significance, but are for visual purposes only.

Children's publishers were plagued with the current economic condition of the country (such as the steep cost for the shift to digital materials for the Philippine buyer) and the political sanctions resulting in unfriendly government policies (such as the stoppage of procurement of books for local schools and libraries). However, intellectual influences (of preferring foreign materials to

local ones) were not as applicable to this group, particularly when juxtaposed to the crippling effect it had on other publishers. This led to my conclusion that Darnton's claim that the external forces influencing the life cycle of the book comprised a single entity is erroneous. While he maintained that the segregation of the three was merely for illustrative purposes, the separation is quite vital. Not all three were evident or strong in comics publishers, and the same can be said in the case of children's publishers.

Mutually Exclusive Roles

While Darnton's focus on the author, publisher, and the rest of the members of the circuit proved to be quite useful in applying phenomenology in my studies, I found that his rendering of the roles as mutually exclusive is a flaw in his model. As evidenced by my studies, most of these roles overlap, particularly that of the author, publisher, printer, and even the reader. Granted, his model was created in 1982 based on the 18th century West, but he did not correct this in his 2007 update of his essay.

My findings suggest that publishers are cognizant of the external forces influencing the life cycle of the book, and they used such knowledge to their advantage. They also carved new roles for themselves. This debunks Darnton's segregation of circuit roles, as I first found in my chapter on university publishers. Philippine university publishers can also be authors, writing for the same audience they catered to as publishers and booksellers, as it was customary in the Philippine context for them to have a bookstore appended to their publishing houses. My study on comics publishers also reinforced this overlapping of roles, as they also performed the roles of authors and

booksellers, while adding another task for themselves: fulfilling the role of a distributor. They proactively extended their role as distributors to bring out not only their own products but also those of other publishers (fiction and non-fiction books, mostly from self-publishers) for a fee. It created a win-win situation, allowing both parties to defray operational costs. I also found that children's publishers have stronger staying capability compared to other players, particularly comics publishers. This is demonstrated by the longevity of their companies, as opposed to those in the comics industry from past decades that were forced to close shop. And while self-publishers on Wattpad are flourishing, traditional publishers offered the prestige of being "legitimately" published as a printed book to young, inexperienced authors in trade for rights to their work. My work also revealed the sad state of being an author in the Philippines. Despite having received prestigious writing awards, a number of books in their portfolio, or even having some of their books made into television shows and blockbuster movies, it was not enough to allow Wattpad authors to live off writing books alone. They all had to maintain day jobs because of this harsh reality.

The Cyclical Circuit

Darnton's Communications Circuit gives direction not only to my thesis but to the work of other scholars. The simplicity and flexibility of his model allowed others to stand on his shoulders. It would not have reached seminal status without such distinguishing traits. However, as my final point, while Darnton claimed that generally, books passed through the same circular, continuous process, this is something I contend to not always be correct or

applicable. In all four of my studies, not once was I able to close a circuit, much less in a cyclical manner. This is largely because of my deviation from Darnton's claim that readers faded into authors, as readers became authors themselves. While *some* readers did become authors, it can neither be said that *all* readers become authors, nor can it be claimed that readers melded into authors *only*. During the course of this thesis, I found that some faded into publishers, booksellers, or even the new actor, book buyers. And of course, we all know of readers who did not become authors.

Limitations

In every study, I posed the question, "to which players do readers fade into, then?" Although not being included in my initial objectives, I added it later. However, I found that the reader is a complicated character, requiring a separate thesis. This is not a failure, but a challenge and opportunity for other scholars to take on.

Another limitation of this thesis is that it comes from the perspective of top-level decision makers. It can be assumed that the landscape will look differently from another angle, say if I interviewed ordinary employees. In an ideal scenario, it would have been good to achieve data saturation from top managers and rank-and-file employees. This would have produced a clearer and more holistic picture of the industry. As such, it is important to treat this thesis as a presentation of case studies instead of a generalized account of the book trade industry.

I also did not delve into trade and textbook publishing in the country. The textbook industry in the Philippines is too big to be manageable for this thesis

(accounting for 70% of the market in 2005 in a report by Philippine Education Publishers Association's then President Dominador Buhain). It is competitive and not quite forthcoming. I tried to reach some of the key players in trade (such as New Day Publishing and Anvil Publishing), but was either declined repeatedly or given data that had too many points requested to be kept "off the record." Researchers who wish to cover these segments would have to consider other methods of gaining entry.

Implications

As highlighted in the previous paragraphs, I contributed to theory not only through a contextual documentation of the Philippine book trade as it is today, but also through an application of Darnton in a developing country where both print and digital materials are in existence. In this section I discuss key implications of my findings for practice, particularly for players in the book trade.

Apart from best practices that publishers (and those who wish to be publishers) can learn from the documentation in my study, I also offer four other lessons for four other groups of individuals. First, for librarians, that they may be more knowledgeable in their dealings with publishers, by being cognizant of their plights as well as the limitations (and extent) of what they can offer for libraries. Second, for readers and book buyers, that they may make more informed decisions not only on which materials to buy, but also how to source them to best support the industry. Third, for administrators and educators, that they may consider courses on publishing. And lastly, for the government and non-government organizations, that my findings would help

them in their pursuit of supporting the industry. May policies be friendlier to players in the book trade, and may laws be able to mitigate the issues that have been brought to the fore here in my work.

Future Research

My thesis focused on niche publishers. However, there are still some interesting cases I have not covered. For one, I found an existing religious book publishing industry in the Philippines (predominantly Roman Catholic and Evangelical Christian). An example of this would be publications of the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP), and the Philippine arm of OMF (Overseas Missionary Fellowship) Literature. Another niche I did not cover is the pirated book industry situated near educational institutions (such as the University of the Philippines and Recto Avenue near the Far Eastern University) and even alongside the Philippine Professional Regulatory Commission⁷⁷ (selling mostly licensure exam review materials). In a conference paper (2008) May Jurilla wrote of these “book alike” vendors, who have almost mastered the “art” of piracy by producing materials which indeed look like the original. While this was observed as early as the 1960s, pirated books then were reported to be imported from Taiwan, where the duplication was done, and then shipped to the Philippines (Cruz, 1967). It seems that pirates in the Philippines have made themselves a “leaner” operation by doing the pirating themselves. In my initial examination of this particular scene, however, I found that police sporadically conducted “raids” in their

⁷⁷ The Professional Regulatory Commission (PRC) regulated and supervised the practice of professionals (except for lawyers) in the Philippines. Its duties include the conduct of licensure examinations.

effort to combat piracy. It is unsafe and thus unwise to take this niche on.

Perhaps, when I have less at stake, and better access. I shall reconsider. Until then, this thesis is the best I can offer.

To conclude, let me say that the publishing industry in the Philippines remains vibrant not only as a business venture, but also in its research opportunities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. NTU Institutional Review Board Approval



Research Support Office

Reg. No. 200604393R

IRB-2015-05-012

19 August 2015

Associate Professor Brendan Luyt
Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information

NTU INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
Project Title: THE CULTURE OF PRINT IN THE PHILIPPINES

I refer to your application for ethics approval with respect to the above project.

The Board has deliberated on your application and noted from your application that your research involves collecting behavioral data from participants through interview.

You have also confirmed that informed consent will be obtained from the participants and you have guaranteed the confidentiality of your participants' biodata obtained from them.

The documents reviewed are:

- a) NTU IRB application form dated **11 May 2015**
- b) Participant information sheet and consent form: version 2 dated **13 July 2015**
- c) Data collection form: version 1 dated **11 May 2015**

The Board is therefore satisfied with the bioethical consideration for the project and approves the ethics application under **Expedited** review. The approval period is from **19 August 2015** to **31 July 2018**. The NTU IRB reference number for this study is **IRB-2015-05-012**. Please use this reference number for all future correspondence.

The following protocol and compliances are to be observed upon NTU IRB approval

1. All research involving procedures greater than minimal risk on minors (individuals who are less than the legal age of 21 years old) requires IRB approved written Parental Consent and assent from the participant to be obtained before any research protocols can be administered. Minimal risk refers to an anticipated level of harm and discomfort that is no greater than that ordinarily encountered in daily life, or during the performance of routine educational, physical, or psychological examination.
2. Only the approved Participants Information Sheet and Consent Form should be used. It must be signed by each subject prior to initiation of any protocol procedures. In addition, each subject should be given a copy of the signed consent form.

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www.ntu.edu.sg



Research Support Office

3. Consent forms are important documents therefore they should be stored in the strictest arrangement. Loss of consent form would result in disciplinary action.
4. No deviation from, or changes of, the protocol should be initiated without prior written NTU IRB approval of an appropriate amendment.
5. The Principal Investigator should report promptly to NTU IRB regarding:
 - a. Deviation from, or changes to the protocol.
 - b. Changes increasing the risk to the subjects and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the trial
 - c. All serious adverse events (SAEs) which are both serious and unexpected.
 - d. New information that may affect adversely the safety of the subjects of the conduct of the trial.
 - e. Completion of the study.
6. Continuing Review Request/ Notice of Study completion form should be submitted to NTU IRB for the following:
 - a. Annual review: Status of the study should be reported to the NTU IRB at least annually using the Continuing Review Request/ Notice of Study completion form.
 - b. Study completion or termination: Continuing Review Request/ Notice of Study completion form is to be submitted within 4 to 6 weeks of study completion or termination.
7. All Principal Investigators should comply with existing legislation that would have an impact on the domain of their research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lee Sing Kong".

Professor Lee Sing Kong,
Chair, NTU Institutional Review Board
encl.

cc Chair, Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information
Members, NTU Institutional Review Board

CONSENT FORM

Title of Study:

The Culture of Print in the Philippines

Objective:

This study aims to find out how people make sense of the culture of print in the Philippines. It seeks to discover certain patterns and connections among experiences, as well as note the similarities and differences between them.

Procedures:

Participants will be asked to answer questions regarding the culture of print in the Philippines. Participants will spend about one hour of their time if they consent to the study. During the interview, they will be audio-taped.

Benefits:

There are no direct benefits to the participants. Participants are helping to contribute to the understanding of the culture of print in the Philippines. The results of the study will be written up in the form of academic papers.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw:

Participation in this study is voluntary and participants can withdraw at any time. Participants may withdraw everything they have said so far, or withdraw parts of what they have said. Participants may choose to do this at any time during the interview or by contacting the researchers up to one week after the interview. Participants also do not have to answer any question they feel uncomfortable with and can stop their participation at any time if they do not wish to continue.

Risks and Discomfort:

No risks or discomfort is expected from participation in this study.

Use of Participant's Name:

The study would like to quote participants by name. However, if they wish, they may choose to remain anonymous, in which case the quotes will not carry any identifying information that could be linked to the participant(s).

Confidentiality:

Any information provided in the context of this research, including by email, will be used only by the PI (principal investigator), Brendan Luyt, co-PI (co-principal investigator) Karryl Kim Sagun and, if necessary, transcriptionists and translators, and will be kept confidential.

Compensation:

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

QUERIES

If participants have questions at any time, they may contact Brendan Luyt: brendan@ntu.edu.sg or Karryl Kim Sagun: karrylki001@e.ntu.edu.sg. They may also contact the Institutional Review Board of Nanyang Technological University directly: irb@ntu.edu.sg for questions or complaints regarding rights and treatment as participants in this research.

SIGNED CONSENT

I have read the consent form and freely agree to participate in the study.

Choose one:

I agree to be quoted using my real name.

I agree to be quoted but I wish to have a fictitious name used in place of my real name.

I do not agree to be quoted.

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Name of the participant, please print)

_____ (Date)

Appendix C. Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What's your story? Can you tell me about how you became a publisher?
2. Can you tell me about your duties and responsibilities as publisher?
3. What is your best experience?
4. How about the worst experience?
5. Can you describe the challenges you have or are currently experiencing as a publisher?
6. Was the job what you expected it to be? Why or why not?
7. Can you describe a typical day in your job?
8. What do you think are qualities or qualifications that are required of a publisher?
9. Did you, before coming here, expect to be a publisher?
10. What do you think is the role of (academic/comic/Wattpad/children's) book publishers in society today? How does it differ from other publishing houses?
11. How is selling (academic/comic/Wattpad/children's) books different from selling other books, in your opinion?
12. What can you say about the notion that print culture is dying?
13. Any plans for the future?
14. Is there anything you would like to add that we have not discussed?

Appendix D. Recruitment and Tactics for Gaining Access

University Publishers

Organization	Participant	Initial Tactic(s)	Result	Re-strategizing/ Resolution	Result	Remarks
Ateneo de Manila University	Rica Bolipata-Santos	<i>Known sponsor approach</i> <i>Demonstration of professional suitability</i> <i>Openness</i> <i>Past links with organization</i>	Approved			I worked as a librarian in the ADMU, where Santos is teaching. She also served as Director of the Ateneo Library of Women's Writings, and I have worked with her in numerous projects during that time.
De La Salle University	David Jonathan Bayot	<i>Finding an informant through an intermediary</i> <i>Known sponsor approach</i> <i>Demonstration of professional suitability</i> <i>Openness</i>	Approved			Intermediary: Donna Labangon, Librarian, De La Salle University
University of the Philippines	J. Neil Garcia	<i>Finding an informant through an intermediary</i> <i>Known sponsor approach</i> <i>Demonstration of professional suitability</i> <i>Openness</i>	Rejected	<i>Building trust and rapport; waiting and being patient</i> <i>Flexibility and compromise to accommodate informants' busy schedules</i>	Approved	Intermediaries: Elvira Lapuz, Librarian, University of the Philippines, Diliman; Eimee Rhea Lagrama, Librarian, University Archives Division, University of the Philippines, Diliman Persistence was carried out in spite of ignored emails, phone calls, fax messages (requested by the office of the participant), and waiting for three hours for informant during the scheduled interview in view of the informant's busy schedule
University of Santo Tomas	John Jack G. Wigley	<i>Finding an informant through an intermediary</i> <i>Known sponsor</i>	Rejected	<i>Building trust and rapport; waiting and being patient</i> <i>Flexibility and</i>	Rejected	Intermediaries: Jenneth Gomez, Librarian, UST; Kaori Fuchigami, Librarian, UST Questions were sent

		<p><i>approach</i></p> <p><i>Demonstration of professional suitability</i></p> <p><i>Openness</i></p>		<p><i>compromise to accommodate informants' busy schedules</i></p>		<p>in advance (requested) to exhibit openness</p> <p><i>Accepting that the current plan may not be working and aborting attempt to gaining access</i></p> <p>In the end the request was still rejected through a phone conversation, as according to them the director is very busy and is always overseas</p>
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Comics Publishers

Organization	Participant	Initial Tactic(s)	Result	Re-strategizing/Resolution	Result	Remarks
Komikero Publishing	Gerry Alanguilan	<p><i>Known sponsor approach</i></p> <p><i>Demonstration of professional suitability</i></p> <p><i>Openness</i></p>	Rejected	<p><i>Accepting that the current plan may not be working and aborting attempt to gaining access</i></p> <p>Informant's travel plans would not permit the interview</p>		He recommended others who fit the criteria as well.
Meganon Comics	Paolo Herras	<p><i>Finding an informant through an intermediary</i></p> <p><i>Known sponsor approach</i></p> <p><i>Demonstration of professional suitability</i></p> <p><i>Openness</i></p>	Approved			Intermediary: Gerry Alanguilan, Filipino comic book writer, artist and publisher
Nautilus Comics	Jamie Bautista	<p><i>Finding an informant through an intermediary</i></p> <p><i>Known sponsor approach</i></p> <p><i>Demonstration of professional suitability</i></p> <p><i>Openness</i></p>	Approved			Intermediary: Gerry Alanguilan, Filipino comic book writer, artist and publisher

Anino comics	Carljoe Javier	<p><i>Finding an informant through an intermediary</i></p> <p><i>Known sponsor approach</i></p> <p><i>Demonstration of professional suitability</i></p> <p><i>Openness</i></p>	Approved			Intermediary: Gerry Alanguilan, Filipino comic book writer, artist and publisher
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Self-Publishers

Participant	Wattpad name	Initial Tactic(s)	Result	Re-strategizing/Resolution	Result	Remarks
“Denny R.” (goes by pseudonym only)	@haveyouseenthisgirl	<p><i>Known sponsor approach</i></p> <p><i>Demonstration of professional suitability</i></p> <p><i>Openness</i></p>	Rejected	<p><i>Accepting that the current plan may not be working and aborting attempt to gaining access</i></p> <p>Informant’s school schedule would not permit the interview</p>		She recommended others who fit the criteria as well.
Kim Villanueva	@ilurvbooks	<p><i>Finding an informant through an intermediary</i></p> <p><i>Known sponsor approach</i></p> <p><i>Demonstration of professional suitability</i></p> <p><i>Openness</i></p>	Approved			Intermediary: Denny R.
Noreen Capili	@noringai	<p><i>Known sponsor approach</i></p> <p><i>Demonstration of professional suitability</i></p> <p><i>Openness</i></p>	Approved			Recommended by Veronica Silagpo, Librarian, International School Manila
Mina V. Esguerra	@MinaVE	<p><i>Known sponsor approach</i></p> <p><i>Demonstration of professional suitability</i></p> <p><i>Openness</i></p>	Approved			Recommended by Veronica Silagpo, Librarian, International School Manila

Children's Publishers

Organization	Participant	Initial Tactic(s)	Result	Re-strategizing/ Resolution	Result	Remarks
Adarna Publishing House	Ani Rosa Almario	<i>Known sponsor approach</i> <i>Demonstration of professional suitability</i> <i>Openness</i>	Approved			Recommended by my sister, Nadine Mae Sagun, who used to be a teacher for the early grades at The Raya School owned and managed by Almario
Lampara Books	Segundo Matias, Jr.	<i>Known sponsor approach</i> <i>Demonstration of professional suitability</i> <i>Openness</i>	Approved			
Ilaw ng Tahanan Publishing, Inc.	Frances Ong	<i>Known sponsor approach</i> <i>Demonstration of professional suitability</i> <i>Openness</i>	Approved			

Appendix E. Codebook

University Publishers

Code/Category	Theme
Empathizing with authors Sharing teaching experiences	<i>Academic Experiences</i>
Being appointed by administration Needing some business acumen Dealing with distribution channels Going through operational challenges Having a mentoring phase	<i>Learning the Ropes</i>
Carrying out mandate of the press Getting directive from administration	<i>A Mandate Sui Generis</i>
Moving from print to digital Planning for the future	<i>Going Digital... and Back</i>
Establishing own niche	<i>On Niche Finding and Diversifying</i>
Outsourcing Planning for the future	<i>Maintaining Practicality</i>

Comic Book Publishers

Code/Category	Theme
Being involved in the creative industry Sharing teaching experiences Arguing with other stakeholders Being a comic fan himself	<i>Belongingness to the Creative and Academic Communities</i>
Being a comic fan himself Trying to understand the market Getting into merchandise Participating in events	<i>Of Comic Conventions and Cult Followings</i>
Having distribution woes Facing challenges Getting into merchandise Participating in events	<i>Lack of Local Bookstore Support</i>
Having Distribution woes Facing challenges Imparting philosophies in publishing	<i>Novel Lessons and Shifting Roles</i>

Wattpad Author-Publishers

Code/Category	Theme
Beginning in Wattpad Reading digitally Writing as a career	<i>Varying Views on Wattpad</i>
Dealing with editors Getting feedback from writing	<i>The Author as Publisher, the Author with a Publisher</i>

Publishing on other digital apps Publishing traditionally Wearing a publisher hat	
Being a reader Censoring Reading digitally Interacting with readers	<i>The Author and the Reader</i>
Writing as a career	<i>The Status of the Author in the Philippines</i>

Children's Book Publishers

Code/Category	Theme
Having a background in Education Getting a change in career	<i>Different Paths Leading to Publishing</i>
Experiencing difficulties as a publisher Making decisions as a publisher Obtaining a sense of fulfilment	<i>Dealing with book buyers</i>
Having a different standard for literature Making decisions as a publisher Preferring printed books	<i>Slowly and Steadily Carrying the Last Bastion of Print</i>