

New study highlights Australian book publishing industry is fighting back against digital disruption

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An Australian first study by Macquarie University of the country's book publishing industry reveals considerable innovation in response to the digital disruption that has resulted in a significant drop in onshore book sales.

The study uncovers the strategies being used by Australian publishers by analysing findings from interviews with 25 senior Australian publishers of various sizes, across trade, [education](#), scholarly and literary sectors.

Dr Jan Zwar, researcher at Macquarie University's Faculty of Business and Economics, said, "As a mid-size industry, Australian publishers have been forced to work harder in order to compete globally and deal with major changes that have been occurring across the industry."

"We saw publishers develop defensive strategies to entrants such as Google, Apple and Amazon, for example the development of direct to consumer print and ebook sales. In some cases, such as Harlequin, the sale of ebooks is an extension of its postal mail order services to readers."

"While other publishers employed opportunistic strategies that leveraged digital technology, such as open access publishing and the use of metadata, apps and social media for promotion."

"For instance, Momentum was set up in Australia by Pan Macmillian to experiment with epubublishing, ebook pricing and digital sales channels. Kylie Scott, who is now a *New York Times* best-selling author, was discovered through Momentum's open submission process."

"Other strategies aimed to open up new, different markets and to create new business models, for instance new types of royalty agreements between publishers and authors and moves to subscription models," added Dr Zwar.

The report also looks at the structural changes within the industry and the impact this is having on book sales.

For instance, Big W is now believed to be the single biggest book retailer in Australia. The online retailer Booktopia, purchased Bookworld in 2015 and is now the dominant Australian-based online retailer, with an estimated market share of six to seven per cent.

On education book publishing, Dr Zwar commented, "Education publishing is arguably undergoing more radical transformation than trade publishing because it is also affected by disruption in the education sector. In addition to technology, education [publishing](#) is affected by government policies to improve education and employment outcomes as well as financial constraints."

Provided by Macquarie University

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