

MOURNING FOR THE DEATH OF PUBLISHING?

In many ways, publishing is healthier now than it ever was: more books are published each year, more books are purchased - more and more and more. According to UNESCO figures, about 380,000 books were published in the US and Britain in 2005. This figure has increased, by some estimates, to 400,000 in the US alone during 2009. So it would not be rational to speak of the "death" of publishing.

But over the last 30 years, the focus of publishing has shifted from trying to publish **new classics** - books that will be read now and 100 years from now - to trying to publish **new best-sellers**. The publishing business, feeling pressures to survive, has been forced to adopt the standard patterns of hypercommercialism: trying to persuade the market that it must have the newest thing, in order to have an occasion to produce something that seems new. Classics-to-be are difficult to identify, and may cost money to promote. For a while now, it has seemed easier to gamble on a book's becoming a transient best-seller than on its being a real classic, whose sales might increase over decades. In this way the publishing industry has gone along with the general shift in commerce that occurred over the last 50 years - from an interest in eternity to an interest in currency, from a respect for authority to a respect only for popularity.

We do mourn the passing of the attitudes we were brought up to respect. But we formed this publisher when we realized that the internet offers publishing a chance to be reborn. Because eBook monographs can be produced and distributed inexpensively, we can afford to offer an ever-widening array of choices to our subscribers. We can finally put aside the physical book, the "codex" - and in its place we can build up a library of new materials that will have value both now and 100 years from now.

The Publisher and Editorial Staff