PUBLISHERS AND THE PUBLIC: GOVERNMENTAL SUPPORT IN EUROPE

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore some of the issues around why and how governments in Europe support the book. It looks at financial support for the creators, producers, promoters, and readers of printed books, and, while it touches on actions by European institutions, the focus is on national and regional activities. The objective is to try and identify different models of support for publishing and the book, and to compare some underlying cultural attitudes and policy objectives of different schemes. Actions in several countries are used to illustrate the different types of support provided, but there is particular reference to the French and British situations, where a variety of support schemes are operated by different branches of central government and by regional authorities.

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Introduction

This is not a comprehensive survey of all publishing support schemes in all countries – far from it. What this paper represents is an exploration of different ways governments in Europe offer support to the book and the book chain. Readers wanting to begin a more detailed survey of such actions and policies throughout Europe may do well to start by consulting the Cultural Policies in Europe, "an expanding Europe-wide information system on cultural policy measures and instruments, a joint venture between the Council of Europe and ERIC*arts,* realised with a network of national partners," at http://culturalpolicies.net. This sets book policy in a European context, and from this we can see that only Finland and Netherlands identify publishing as an area of high expenditure, and the few occasions where book related policies are seen as high priority are libraries (Albania), copyright (Bulgaria) and children's reading (Slovenia). Another useful source of comparative data is the web site of the European Booksellers Federation, and European Publishing Links maintained by the author.

What Models?

The different schemes used to support creators, intermediaries, export activity, and users/readers is closely related to the ways in which the book industry has developed in a particular country, and it is helpful to look at some models of different ways in which the book trade has developed in parts of Europe.

The models proposed by Marc-Olivier Baruch (1994) suggested that there were three different ways in which commercial viability is encouraged by government policies. Firstly, the English model focused on Retail Price Maintenance (until 1995 governed by the Net Book Agreement in the UK and still in operation in several European countries – see table below), VAT policy (currently zero rated in the United Kingdom and reduced in many other parts of Europe) and Public Lending Right (distributing money to authors in relation to the loans of their books from public libraries). These mechanisms are not concerned with content, but with ensuring continued public access to and stable commercial viability of book supply systems, while at the same time providing *some* secure income for authors.

The second model is from Sweden, which unlike the Britain never historically supported fixed prices, but, until recently, applied a high VAT rate to books. The effect of a high VAT in increasing prices in countries like Sweden, and thus possibly reducing demand, was accompanied by a high level of public subsidy for the entire book chain – authors, publishers and booksellers. In Sweden this policy has now been amended as part of harmonisation with EU norms and as a result of the current austerity. Library budgets have been reduced but VAT rates on books have been also been reduced in a move that has brought the Swedish model nearer to the British one, and Jean Richard's updating of Baruch's report in 2000 reflects this coming together of the British and Swedish models. Both have traditionally implied significant state financial support for libraries, ensuring broad public access to books.

Lastly Baruch proposed the French model, in which libraries were historically seen as less important. France maintains (after a brief period of free pricing between 1979 and 1981) a policy of fixed pricing that is seen as essential to the survival of a varied book trade, although this, as in other countries, is now potentially

under significant threat from an attack spearheaded by the megastore chains of FNAC and Virgin. France also has subsidies at all levels of the book chain from creation to readership, and while no one sector is particularly favoured, in comparison to the other models there is a far greater emphasis on the creator/author. This focus on the author/creator and a pride in the continued tradition of patronage (*mécénat*) does not prevent significant state financial support for publishers, booksellers, translators and other cultural actors in the book world, but means that the authors/creators/artists, given the continued public awareness of and respect for the intellectuals, are rarely sidelined as they sometimes appear to be in the British publishing model.

The different emphases of public support for books shown by these models, and the balance (or imbalance) between support for creation, production, marketing and reading are critical to understanding some of the reasons for government policy in Europe, and even in the spring of 2003, Herb Lottman would write, albeit ironically, of a "clash of civilisations."

Reader or Writer Orientation

A study conducted in 1997 by the Centre Régional des Lettres of Languedoc-Roussillon (CRL 1997) looked at Baruch's models, and, from a survey of local authorities in 20 European regions, evolved three different models that are in some respects similar to the above, but also point to other differences in book support systems. It defined the different supports as reader-oriented, writer-oriented, and support oriented to reconstruction.

In the reader-oriented model "public action is justified in its capacity to stimulate the reader" and the focus is on library networks and the use of regulatory instruments. Under this model the creator (in this French study identified as "artist") is not seen as a primary beneficiary of any support.

The second model is writer oriented and is associated with "direct intervention at the artistic level" and among other participants of the book chain (publishers, book shops, translators). This model is identified as typical of the Latin countries and associated with a tradition of patronage or *mécénat*.

A third model, called the crisis and rebuilding model, predominant in Eastern and Central Europe since the late 1980s, reflects the breakdown of the previous sectoral structures where institutions such as writers' unions, ministries and state publishers cannot adapt quickly enough to the changing economic and social situations. In this circumstance, the two previous models (championed by the US/UK on the one hand, and by the EU/France on the other) create competing pressures and possible dissonance in the book chain's expectations of the public sector. These dissonances can be seen in most developing economies where liberalisation policies have led to rapid and sometimes chaotic change in the book world as in all sections of social and economic life.

This study points to different views of the book as an article of consumption and as an article of creation. The gap between the creator and the consumer can only be effective if the book supply chain is effective, and if all members of the chain understand and participate in a coherent book chain.

The tensions between the different approaches to subsidy (aimed either at creators, intermediaries or end-users) are made more visible in countries that have undergone fundamental changes in economic, social and cultural life, but they are

present to some extent in the book industries of all countries. Actions of governments to support the book industry must be aware of these tensions, and programmes that fail to incorporate an understanding of these tensions are likely to have little effect on the creation of a varied and vibrant publishing sector.

Publishing and Bookselling, Printing, and Authorship

A final set of models of European (and indeed world publishing) arose during a colloquium at the University of Sherbrooke in Canada in May 2000.

The introductory papers looked the contrasting book trade models of Germany, France and Great Britain. In this context, James Raven identifies ways in which the British book trade developed around the bookselling system established from the seventeenth century. "Devolution of economic and policing functions by the state" was a factor in the development of a publishing and bookselling structure that remained mostly, but not exclusively, centred on a metropolitan book industry. This industry used the expanding communications networks to disseminate its products both within the country via the improving postal service and an expanding railway system and throughout the world as a part of the colonial development. Raven (2001, 22) notes that the "colonial departments of the large publishing firms by the end of the century were key income generators." This British tradition sees the book primarily as a commercial product not very unlike other commercial products, and centres on the intermediaries as the key to successful book development. British support for publishing still has a heavy focus on these aspects – especially related to export promotion sponsored by the government, parastatal organisations and the industry associations with which it works closely.

Frédéric Barbier's (2001) paper on the German book trade points to the ways in which the development of publishing and printing in Germany (and in the countries coming under German influence) were predicated on the particular systems of book distribution practiced by the German book trade both at home and abroad. These systems, with roots in *Tauschhandel* (exchange), are closely associated with the book fairs in Frankfurt and Leipzig and with the guild structures in the German book trade. In the German book trade the exchange of ideas and thoughts is inherent in the production and exchange of physical books. Books are knowledge and knowledge transfer, and the motivation of the trade groups in printing and publishing was thus to remove barriers to exchange, at both a commercial and cultural level. In this model the book is an object, first created then exchanged.

The third of the three models proposed at the Sherbrooke colloquium, the French model, is, according to Jean-Yves Mollier (2001, 48), a function of "*l'hégémonie parisienne sur le livre*." Here the author-publisher relationship that came out of the time of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau is central to publishing, and publishing in Paris has frequently been seen as the apogee of intellectual recognition. Pointing to publication of *Lolita* in Paris he suggests that the connection between Paris and literature in the years between the two world wars was analogous to that between Hollywood and cinema. Paris was where the real action was.

The other side of the metropolitan intellectual mission was a desire, from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, to bring literature to a wider audience. The Paris publishers with an elitist view of literature and who were slow to adopt technological change did not survive. Those who did survive and prosper, for example Louis Hachette and Michel Lévy, did so by offering "literature" to a

wider audience: "*ils firent naître un lectorat très étendu; firent consommer plus de livres par tête de lecture que dans aucun autre pays et rendirent à la littérature le meilleur service qu'elle pût en attendre*" (Mollier 2001, 59). So in France publishing succeeds through literature ("*la noyau dur de son action*") and prospers by democratising the market, helped by the multitude of prizes that have arisen since the Goncourt began in 1904. This emphasis on the literary is central to the idea of the book in France, and while, as Mollier accepts, there is more money to be made from educational and reference publishing, publishing is generally regarded in France as a creative endeavour. Add to this the desire to universalise the cultural experience, and the cultural output of creative organisations (rarely seen as cultural industries as they are increasingly in Britain) becomes part of the republican ideal.

These three studies show different but somewhat parallel views of what is central to the publishing activity and the functioning of the "book chain." On the one hand there are the authors and creators who are responsible for articulating cultural messages of value to the society in which they live. These authors require support or patronage so that they can continue to develop "works" that will be of value to the society, even if the production and dissemination of the published writings cannot be undertaken according to strict commercial models. The authors may be supported directly (through bursaries, writer in residence schemes, tax advantages etc.) or indirectly through support for publishers, translators, libraries with financial incentives that feed back royalty or rights income to the author on books that might otherwise produce little.

On the other hand we are presented with readers, end-users, libraries and information services, all expressed in terms of a market, which under liberal economics might be expected to function as the ultimate arbiter of what is good and worthy of support. Only works that are able to survive according to the strict commercial requirements of the market economy are, according to this view, worthy of support, although the support offered may seem at odds with the idea of pure market that should function without state intervention of any kind. Under this neo-liberal view the book chain is assisted in functioning efficiently and successfully if taxes are reduced, technology developments are supported so that new media and new delivery platform can be exploited to extend the revenues and profits made from publishing "content" or "assets," and if export markets are developed through sale of products, services and licences.

A third view, associated mostly with social democratic northern Europe, is that governments have a responsibility to maintain and increase access to books through subsidy that makes books (and other cultural products) available to all sectors of the population, whether or not it is commercially viable to do so. Under this kind of regime we see great importance placed on the library system giving low-cost or free universal access to books, and also a positive support for the publication and propagation of marginal literature.

Looking at all support from these three aspects models of support can be broadly characterised as follows.

- Support geared to ease the transfer of money from readers/customers to authors and publishers, through the development of legal and fiscal policies and other financial measures favourable to the functioning of an efficient free market in publications

- Support to readers/library users through state support for libraries and in particular involving the purchase of locally produced books, thus providing the additional guarantee of revenue for local publishers
- Subsidy for activities within the book chain that might otherwise be unprofitable or high-risk. These subsidies make available books that otherwise would not get published, in particular poetry and other literary works, translations, often written, published and read by marginal groups
- Support for writers, illustrators and other creative artists involved in publishing, both related to the process of writing for the market and in encouraging the engagement of writers in other parts of civil society
- Institutional support (both financial and logistical) for marketing activities undertaken by both large and medium sized publishing enterprises, frequently in overseas markets and at book fairs and exhibitions in export markets. These can have two quite different goals: to spread cultural awareness of the country in the world, and to increase commercial activity in international markets.

Legal and Fiscal Policies

Fixed Prices. The debate about the benefits or otherwise of fixed book prices centres on whether the stimulation of retail sales growth through price competition and price promotion is achieved at the cost of reducing variety in the book chain, both in terms of what publishers publish and what bookshops stock. In other words, does free pricing benefit the consumer or reduce customer choice and the range of publications on offer? Does it also affect the viability of smaller publishers and booksellers, ultimately having a detrimental effect on cultural diversity and the quality of cultural life?

In the UK, in spite of the fact that title output by publishers continues to expand, there is a growing awareness that price competition has favoured the increased market share gained by the major chains and latterly supermarkets, to the detriment of the independent booksellers. In addition, this market share is skewed toward a small number of titles, in particular most recently those by J.K. Rowling. There is a growing awareness that booksellers did not make the profits they could have out of the Harry Potter phenomenon, and a recognition that, as the book industry becomes even more dominated by celebrity authors and "hit" driven, there will be a need for closer collaboration between trade publishers and the booksellers to bring order into the market. The music industry is often seen as a model for successful collaboration in terms of higher promotional spending, tighter control of release dates, and an orchestrated progression from premium pricing on release date followed by ever more aggressive promotional pricing to get deep market penetration. At present the book trade tends to operate in exactly the opposite way, with high discounted prices being offered on or before publication, embargos being regularly ignored, and a promotional spend that does not reflect the high profits made by publishers. It seems likely that the courts will be used to reinforce this new move to create a more ordered market.

The arguments about fixed prices in other European countries will continue, but the tide seems to have turned with recent laws on fixed prices being promulgated in Germany and proposed in Norway and Netherlands. Fixed prices may be better for both publishers and booksellers than previously thought, and the consumer may also gain in terms of choice and service.

VAT. The debate over VAT harmonisation continues in Europe and the British arguments for low VAT rates on books (expressed in terms of cultural and educational advantage, but based on commercial fears) seem to be holding. The following table, based on UK Booksellers Association, IPA charts and Dubruille, shows that there is a wide variation in the VAT rates charges on books, but it is clear that nearly all 25 members of the EU maintain a lower rate of VAT for books. The lower rate of VAT on books is a very important support provided to the book industry by government, and while reducing the VAT rate further would probably not lead to a significant increase in unit sales of most books (in spite of the recent Swedish example which may be interpreted in a shift of purchasing to Swedish sources rather than an overall increase in book sales), raising VAT rates would almost certainly have the effect of reducing sales, at least in the short term.

Country	Fixed Price	General VAT	VAT on Books
Austria	Yes	20%	10%
Belgium	No	21%	6%
Cyprus		13%	0%
Czech Republic	No	22%	5%
Denmark	Yes	25%	25%
Estonia	No	18%	5%
Finland	No	22%	8%
France	Yes	19.6%	5.5%
Germany	Yes	16%	7%
Greece	Yes	18%	4%
Hungary	Yes	25%	12% (0% textbooks)
Iceland	No	24.5%	14% (10% Icelandic Books)
Ireland	No	21%	0%
Italy	Yes	20%	4%
Latvia	No	18%	5%
Lithuania	No	18%	18% (0% Children's and textbooks)
Luxembourg	No	15%	3%
Netherlands	Yes	19%	6%
Norway	Yes	23%	0%
Poland	No	22%	0%
Portugal	Yes	19%	5%
Slovenia	No	19%	8%
Spain	Yes	16%	4%
Sweden	No	25%	6%
Switzerland	No	7.6%	2.4%
UK	No	17.5%	0%

Support for Readers and Library Users

Book Purchase Schemes. Libraries have traditionally been major markets for books and publications of all kinds. In some countries the government has provided funds to ensure that the local publishing industry, often struggling in a small population and smaller language market, can afford to keep publishing in the national language. Purchases of over 1000 copies of each title in the Norwegian *innkjøpsordning* model, and of lesser quantities (50-200) in other countries such as Croatia, have helped to sustain production of locally written materials in national language. This sort of subsidy, though, rewards production, rather than demand or usage (as with Public Lending Right) and may not lead to self-sufficiency in a publishing industry. PLR by contrast rewards consumption and authors receive

rewards according to reader interest. PLR is increasingly being brought into the European book framework.

In some countries the connection between publishing development and a healthy library system is recognised by the trade organisations and government agencies. In Greece, for example, the involvement of three ministries in the supervision of public libraries has now been recognised as an obstacle to modernisation, and the National Book Centre (founded by the Greek Ministry of Culture) is making efforts build up the library system. In other countries, publishers believe their sales suffer because people are accustomed to books being freely available through libraries. If this is the case, publishing more books with or without subsidy is not going to increase the size of the market or reach new readers. Publishers may get increased revenues, but they will not have a sustainable growing market. In many countries of Europe, UK included, publishers have been slow to see the important role that libraries of all sorts can play in creating a sustainable market for books.

Reader Promotions – Different World Book Days. Governments can be effective in supporting collaborations between the different sectors, helping to develop new and parallel channels of distribution, putting books and reading higher up the agenda. Reading promotion is a common activity sponsored by arts councils and book development organisations at a local and national level, but there are different approaches to reading promotion, and this can be seen in different approaches to World Book Day. World Book Day with its origins in Catalonia is now celebrated on 23rd April (the anniversary of Cervantes' death), and is connected with an old Catalan tradition of giving a rose on St. George's Day (St. Jordi). In 1926 this custom was adapted by booksellers to include the gift of a book, and the day was later adopted by UNESCO. Interestingly a German World Book Day website (www.lesekoepfe.de) maintains that the idea of a celebration of Shakespeare on 23rd April was originated by Goethe in 1771.

In most countries the spirit of giving is enshrined in the event, so that, in Sweden for instance, an "Idea Group on the World Book Day was constituted in 1996, and some of The Swedish Publishers Associations members donated 55,000 books to Sweden's roughly 12,000 day-care centres. Each of them could go to a bookshop and fetch a parcel containing four or five books. Some 10,000 day-care centres took advantage of the offer. The Post Office sponsored the Day by offering free postage on a free book bag. Thus anyone who wanted to could buy a book and post it free of charge within Sweden" (Swedish Institute 2003). But alongside this altruistic activity, "one of the biggest daily newspapers had a special World Book Day supplement containing reports, advertisements, discount coupons etc. Booksellers had a number of discount prices and many publishers chose the 23 April to launch new titles."

In the UK, in spite of the obvious connection with St. George and the Shakespeare association of 23rd April, World Book Day is celebrated in March. Why? Because this enables publishers and booksellers to generate sales in an otherwise fallow time of the year. Coupons appear in newspapers (ones that are part of corporations that also publish books), school are encouraged to apply for £1 book tokens for students, and there is little effort to disguise the purely commercial basis of most World Book Day promotions. What charitable activity there is focuses mostly on supporting Book Aid International, an activity that will not hurt the commercial interests of the UK publishers or booksellers.

In France, World Book Day gets less attention, and the major national activity takes place around the *lire en fête* each October. This is an activity of the culture ministry, the centre national du livre, regional and municipal authorities. While this undoubtedly helps to sustain the important sales of the *rentrée littéraire*, the post summer period in France when a very high proportion of French literary fiction is published, it focuses on authors and readers.

These national book festivals demonstrate an essential tension between the commercial activity of selling books and the two sides of the book as cultural object – creativity and enjoyment though reading.

Supporting the Marginal

Languages, Translations, Translators. This is not the place to reiterate issues of language hegemony, but the predominance of English (and to lesser extent French and German) as a publishing language is well known and has an effect on publishing in all countries of Europe. In this arena, the non-English language publishing nations (and some like Scotland and Ireland that share the English language but fight fiercely to maintain cultural identity and difference) use a variety of schemes to promote both the vitality of reading of national literatures in their own countries, and the translation of their culture into other languages. This is seen as under threat from the English language or from the hegemony of a larger neighbouring publishing country that uses the same national language.

Thus was have the Finnish Literature Information Centre promoting translations from all Finnish national languages (Finnish, Swedish and Sámi) "primarily for works which foster familiarity with Finland abroad in the field of literature and non-fiction works which also have a literary merit" (Finlit 2003) and the Swedish Institute supporting the "wider circulation of Swedish quality fiction" "with priority given to works published after 1945" (Swedish Institute 2003). Scottish Arts Council support for translation, under the overall strategy "that aims to ensure that literature will make a significant and distinctive contribution to Scotland's future success by investing in the talent and creativity of Scotland's writers, and supporting publishing in Scotland" (Scottish Arts Council 2003), gives priority to assisting "publishers overseas with the cost of translating works of 20th century and contemporary literature."

In many ways, the smaller language groups seem to have a similar concern for the artist/creator typical of the French model, which supports translation of all sort of book through the Centre National du Livre (CNL 2003) and also (often for books of contemporary interest) through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*La Lettre* 2001), including the Burgess Programme operated from the French Embassy in London. It is worth noting that France also operates a government scheme to support translation between different languages in France (e.g. Breton, Catalan, Corse), and this too is managed by the CNL.

This direct French intervention is in contrast to the Arts Council England approach which no longer offers any translation grants, but supports organisations and small companies engaged in literary translations *into* English, such as the British Centre for Literary Translation at the University of East Anglia, and small publishers (e.g. Dedalus, Anvil Press, Arcadia and Ace) and a literary magazine *Modern Poetry in Translation*. The only translation-related support offered by Arts Council

England that is focused on mainstream publishing is the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize, run in collaboration with the *Independent* newspaper.

As well as subsidies for publishers of translations, some subsidies are given to translators themselves, offering residences and bursaries, such as those offered by the Ministry of the Flemish Community of up to one month at the Translators' House in Leuven and reasonable bursaries (€ 1239.47 per month in 2002). The objective here is to encourage the development of the translation profession as well as to encourage more translation from the lesser known language into other European and world languages – a cultural mission.

It is difficult to compare the activities of various translation support schemes, although the Association of Italian Publishers have recently codified some of the schemes (Seghi & Novati 2003). Not all give detail of what money is allocated, how it is spent and, most importantly, there are few if any accessible records of the sales success (or otherwise) of titles supported under various schemes. One thing we can note is that the larger publishing nations seem to use translation subsidy as a means of retaining membership of a core European linguistic/cultural group. So, for example, *Goethe Institut* funds tend to be directed to translations in French, English and Spanish, and there are French schemes operated from embassies in the UK and USA that are evidently intended to make sure that important French work does not go unnoticed in the anglophone world.

It might be thought that smaller countries grant translation subsidies primarily to enable authors and publishers to more easily get income from rights sales, and thus ensure not only continued creation, but the continued viability of the publishers. This does not always seem to be the case. Translation subsidies offered by smaller countries frequently seem to be directed towards translations into other lesser used national languages and to larger language groupings on the edge of the traditional publishing core of Europe. Thus we see grants from the Finnish Literature Agency (Finlit 2003) in 2003 going to translate Finnish books into Russian (6 grants), French (5), German (4), English – US (2), but also into Finnish (from Samí), Ukrainian, Spanish, Hebrew, Dutch, Turkish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian. For translations into Finnish grants were given to books originating in Hungary, Netherlands, Czech Republic, France, Poland, US, Italy and Germany.

The Finnish national case reflects what one might interpret as a grouping of non-aligned publishing nations, battling to survive in the face of the bigger publishing nations (whose works can be profitably translated without subsidy) to preserve the diversity of European culture. This seems to be reinforced at the European Union level, where Culture 2000 translation grants in 2002 went to Greece (11 publishers – 67 titles), Sweden (5 publishers – 26 titles), Norway (5 publishers – 29 titles), Denmark (2 publishers – 12 titles), Netherlands (2 publishers – 17 titles), Latvia (1 publisher – 4 titles), Italy (3 publishers – 15 titles), Spain (3 publishers – 14 titles), Romania (3 publishers – 17 titles), Germany (1 publisher – 5 titles), Iceland (3 publishers – 21 titles), Hungary (2 publishers – 8 titles), Czech Republic (2 publishers – 12 titles), Lithuania (2publishers – 9 titles), Finland (1 publisher – 10 titles). The languages translated from included French, English, Hungarian, Spanish, Italian, Norwegian, Dutch, Swedish, German, Danish, Icelandic, Greek, Polish, Croatian, Portuguese, Romanian, Czech, and Bulgarian. European policy is thus seen as an encouragement of publishing vitality in diversity.

Support for Creation. It is commonplace to suggest that the writer intellectual occupies a radically different social, cultural and media role in different countries of Europe. This difference is influenced by history, temperament and social organisation in the various countries of Europe. The value of the author's contribution, while frequently judged in purely monetary terms, is also reflected in the ways in which our various countries find ways to support authors financially.

Many countries have publicly funded schemes to support "writers in residence," but this means very different things in different countries. There are writers in residence at universities, who, in return for some presenting some lectures and seminars, are given a period in which they may write with a reduced sense of financial panic. In many cases, though, writers-in-residence are not supported to do their own work, but are given a job to do in a prison, hospital, or other institution where their role as writer is subsumed under the state's need to provide useful work for otherwise indigent and idle "artists," while at the same time proving that prisons are not just about punishment and hospitals care for the "whole human being." In this tradition, evident in the Northern tradition, the writer in residence is there for the good of the audience.

Under another tradition, bursaries and "residences" are provided with a different spirit. At the Château of Castries, for example, until recently the home of the Centre Régionale des Lettres de Languedoc-Roussillon near Montpellier, an entire wing to the château was available to writers in residence. This residency was plainly for the benefit of the writer as creator, not a reflection of a social role of the writer in society.

Some countries (e.g. Denmark, Netherlands) offer travel grants to authors to promote national literatures and/or to engage in promotional activity. Additionally, there are some fiscal benefits offered to writers, such as tax reductions or pension assistance offered to writers in Ireland or Croatia. These benefits may be an attempt to reverse emigration trends, or a genuine reflection of the national need to support creative artists who may never be able to earn enough income or pension unless the state intervenes.

Institutional Support. Ministries with responsibility for culture, media, education, industry, foreign affairs, employment and regional development all have in different circumstances ways in which they support books and publishing. In addition to the direct relationships between ministries and the publishing world, there are in most countries parastatal or nongovernmental organisations that have a cultural or educational role that includes an involvement with books and publications. At the regional, local and municipal level, other organisations and layers of government also get involved. Some book events, for example, are sponsored by other unlikely government bodies, so that the annual maritime book fair in Concarneau in Brittany has as amongst its many sponsors the French Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and the Detective Book Fair in Frontignan gets financial support from three local police forces and the Gendarmerie Nationale.

Trade organisations work together with government bodies on market research, employment projections and publishing sector development, the provision of educational materials at all levels, and legislative matters like copyright and taxation. In these interventions, publishing is frequently seen as a "cultural industry," a juxtaposition of culture and commerce that seems to be being increasingly adopted by the European institutions (Zorba 2003).

There are also layers of national, regional (particularly in Spain and France where devolved government has led to a structure of well-financed and politically supported regional cultural bodies) and municipal (e.g. Germany) arts councils and cultural development bodies that have active programmes in publishing. We might note that the political motivation to develop coherent policies towards the book that are often lacking at a national level seem to be very effective at a regional level. This is evident from Scotland to Flanders, from Aquitaine to the Canary Islands. In all of these cases, the local initiatives are not exclusively, as one might suspect, focused on local publishing (e.g. folklore, recipes, tourism, local history) but are much more widely aimed at increasing publishing activity, encouraging local development in a national and European context (c.f. Actes Sud and Verdier in Southern France), and are increasing the exposure of a wider variety of publishing in Europe.

Most people would be aware that the British and French governments are active in promoting their respective national languages. The close involvement of the British Council in TEFL, and the promotion of UK-published EFL and ELT books are well known, and are part of a national marketing campaign connected to the recruitment of foreign students to UK educational establishments.

Spreading the Word in International Markets

Other support for exporters usually comes either from the industry ministry (as in the DTI support for the UK Publishers' Association), from ministries of culture (as in the support given to France Edition/BIEF by the Ministry of Culture), or from foreign ministries, but can also come from departments of tourism, environment, or other regional and local development. At book fairs and through trade missions (incoming and outgoing), governments support export initiatives. Subsidies are provided (frequently through trade organisations) so that publishers can attend overseas book fairs to secure sales of finished books, arrange co-editions and grant licences. Similar objectives are also supported through financial and logistical support for inward missions of publishers, booksellers and other possible customers. The level, manner and focus of such support is usually overtly commercial, although it may be disguised (as is France Edition work to train booksellers) as a more altruistic activity. The economic motivation is also evident in the long British and French tradition of subsidy for textbook publishers selling into developing country markets. The British ELBS scheme was abandoned, replaced by ELST and now continues under the banner of Book Power. The French scheme continues. Here the commercial interests of the publishers are couched in terms of development assistance, and the financial support comes from the development assistance branch of the relevant diplomatic or development ministry.

In all support for export activity, both the French and British systems have tended to favour the larger publishing groups and both the Publishers Association in the UK and the SNE and France Edition have been criticised for this. Under the more cultural guise of the British Council and Institut Français they are also governed by the prevailing (and sometimes contradictory) needs of their respective funding ministries when it comes to book promotion and sponsorship of literary activity.

Many national stands at international book fairs are sponsored by governmental bodies, and, particularly in evidence at Frankfurt and London, demonstrate the

importance that is placed on commerce. At some other international book fairs, the emphasis is clearly more "cultural," but this cultural aspect may be sponsored by the "visiting" country or by the host. The international programmes at Edinburgh and Gothenburg, for example, are evidence of a desire for openness and inclusivity tending to centre either on authors, illustrators and translators or on smaller more marginal publishing enterprises, rather than on the larger publishing enterprises.

The books displayed at the national stands of smaller nations and in their export literature are often a mixture of high quality home grown children's and illustrated books for which (in theory) the publisher is hoping to grant translation and co-edition licences. It is clear that the publishers' reason for attending the fair is not primarily to sell rights but to obtain licences for multinational bestsellers. Thus, while the external presentation of this exposure to export markets is geared to developing international awareness of their national culture in export markets, and government sponsorship in terms of travel grants and exhibition subsidies is seen to support this aim, the real reason for the travel and exhibit may actually act against the development of indigenous content.

Another form of export promotion encouraged and supported by some countries is directly related to bookshops. The French Centre National du Livre has a support scheme to encourage bookshops outside France to stock French books. This scheme will, under certain conditions, pay up to 50% of the invoiced price of books stocked in bookshops outside France. In another approach, the Swedish Institute (a public agency similar in many ways to the British Council) operates the Sweden Bookshop at www.Swedenbookshop.com with a bricks and mortar branch in Stockholm.

Bookshops

In most world book markets the increasing power of book chains has been a hot topic for more than a decade, and there is recognition that government policy toward liberalising trade practices have contributed to the decreased market share and poorer commercial viability of independent booksellers. The power of some retailers to influence price, design, production qualities and content, long of concern to the independent booksellers and some authors, is only now being addressed by the large publishers and the government bodies to whom they look for support.

There are signs of awareness, at least from the publisher's side, that a streamlined and oligopolistic book supply chain may not be in the best interests of either cultural diversity or the development of a healthy environment for publishing and the creative individuals on which they depend, but this view is not necessarily shared by the large retailers.

Just as consumers have been slowly awakening to the fact that supermarkets stock limited varieties of apples (frequently, like publisher's content, imported rather than home grown) or risk adulteration with GM crops (just as media conglomerates will use publications to push movies, computer games or TV characters), then at least at some levels there is an awareness that the retail chains may now be restricting customer choice and having unexpected effects on cultural life.

In France, again, regional book development agencies are at the forefront of addressing this issue. In Aquitaine, what is described as unique action is being taken by the national government and the regional council to develop independent bookshops. Between 1998 and 2002 an extensive consultation led to a protocol

(Lettres d'Aquitaine 2003) that centred on four main action points.

1. Consultancy for bookshops, either individually or collectively, to examine ways to increase profitability and explore ways to develop business.
2. Economic support for such bookshops, including assistance to get city centre sites, equipping and modernising locations, developing improved stock, job creation for qualified booksellers
3. Training for booksellers.
4. Support for activities geared to get support for independent bookshops in the community, to promote books and reading in collaboration with libraries, cultural centres, cinema, schools

This, and similar schemes elsewhere in France, are attempting to re-align the market with government support. There have been similar rumblings among British publishers about the need for publishers and booksellers to cooperate to preserve diversity in both book production and bookselling channels. Governments might do well to support developments in the home market in the same way they do in export markets and look at the market in a holistic way.

Putting Publishers and Public Together

Changes in the publishing business in many countries have led to two essential relationships being disrupted. Publishers and authors are now increasingly out of contact with each other as publishing companies look to agents and packagers to provide content in easily digestible form. Publishers and booksellers have also lost touch as powerful retail channels have taken over the direct contact with customers/readers/end-users and use their increased power to determine what is offered to customers on the basis of stock turn, market share and promotional (often loss-leader) value of the publication.

Government intervention has for too long focused on publishing as a service industry. Publishers in this model exist to package content for a market that is determined by other actors in the book chain. Subsidies in home markets (through support for favourable tax regimes, central library purchase) and export markets (mostly through assistance for publishers to either sell or buy licences to publish the same content in different countries) have taken publishers away from what has been their traditional pre-occupation with collaboration with the creators of works which they saw a value (commercial, social, cultural, even political) in publishing. At the same time, by encouraging policies that work in favour of large retailers (e.g. abolition of fixed prices, increased costs for inner-city retail businesses), turning libraries into information centres and mediateques, and schools into elearning centres, government policy has encouraged publishers to see readers and users of published materials (whether delivered in print or digital) through the eyes of either the large retail corporations or state institutions that are more familiar with delivery than content, and to lose direct contact with and awareness of the potential customers for their products and services.

Contrasts between the French and British approach were addressed by Peter Ayrton of Serpent's Tail after taking part in symposium of 50 European publishers at the 2001 Salon du livre in Paris (*La Lettre* 2001). Firstly, he points out, the public are not just permitted to attend the Paris fair; they are positively encouraged to come. Secondly the fair has publishers of all sizes, including many regional pub-

lishers whose costs are paid by the regions, who also give financial support for an innovation like the "*maison des écrivains*" run by *au diable Vauvert*, a small publisher in a village between Montpellier and Nîmes. Thirdly, the recognition that a diverse financially viable book trade is essential for mitigating the effects of a global bestseller culture keeps France committed to the "*prix fixe*," and enables what Ayrton calls the "long-seller" to get established. He points to the example of Anna Gavalda's *Je voudrais que quelqu'un m'attendre quelque part* (published by the small publisher *Le Dilletante*) as an example of how a small publisher can still sell 200,000 copies in France, and he envies the French book scene where TV book programmes attract millions of viewers, where independent bookshops flourish, whose books are translated all over the world, where book fairs attract thousands, including many young people, and where there is a long tradition of offering exile to writers banned in their own countries.

Conclusion

If in France and the UK there is a move for different sectors of the book industry to work together, in countries like Greece, much of the effort to improve the book trade both at home and abroad is focused on national book centres that bring together different parts of the book chain. To an extent these holistic concerns are echoed in the Regional Book Centres funded by the Regional Councils in France, Spain and Italy. In this context some publishers and bookseller associations seem out of date and unsound in their definition of trade and cultural sectors. It should not be the role of governments to sponsor one sector against another, and ministries might be well advised to look for industry-wide initiatives to support and sponsor – including at a European level where different sector organisations appear to be moving closer together.

Francesc Parcerisas, a Catalan poet makes a strong case for the role states should play in supporting publishing.

> *I believe the bottom line does not lie in numbers but in some sort of "independence," not in the "nation" of the national concepts of literature but in the "state" frame… In ecological terms, what is important is not the size of the species but the safety of its habitat. A safe but small habitat will preserve the species, its development and numbers. A huge habitat without rules and with uncontrolled predators will be fatal for small species, which eventually will die out, leaving the habitat as a homogeneous, monocultural land* (Parcerisas 2003).

In this context is important that those who are deciding on government support for the book provide this "safe habitat," and the survival of much European publishing may lie not in increasing the global content and international outreach publishing in world languages, but in engaging governments in a dialogue on the role of publishing in defining a vibrant national identity within the European context.

Is support given to creation or consumption or a synthetic combination of the two? Is the book expected to survive because of the workings of the liberal economy or because of patronage, and who else benefits from a sustainable book culture (tourism, politics, other media industries, employment)? Do we assume that financial subsidy will always lead to sustainability, or do we recognise that funding

can give creative people an unrealistic view of the market and reduce their commitment to quality and diversity?

We need to consider not just financial subsidy, but also all government activities (at local and regional, as well as national level) that encourage authors, publishers, booksellers, libraries and readers to broaden access to books and reading – and to make sure that diversity and quality are reflected in a national publishing output. We must identify those who can influence and decide policy, so that actions developed at a local, regional, and national level are coordinated and/or complementary in different parts of book chain so that all sectors (and the public) get a win-win effect from any funding and logistical support.

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