And this huge number of new books is bookshops such as Amazon. There is the mixed blessing of internet making it impossible to estimate. That is because of the numerous for- tunes, and on the internet with its numerous for- tunes. Specialist small publishers and hence are absorbed, their specialist editors dis- covered, precious backlists remaindered, and the writers cheryspoked.

The good new is that there are more books being written and published. In the United Kingdom alone 180,000 new titles hit the bookshops each year, an increasing number of them self-pub- lished. And the exact number produced on the internet with its numerous for- mats such as e-books and online jour- nals is impossible to estimate. That brings its own problems, especially for bookhounds, who can hardly be expected to keep track of every title, although for readers there is the mixed blessing of internet bookshops such as Amazon.

And this huge number of new books is the basic problem facing us, all small publishers, writers, independent book- sellers and readers alike: working out how to get around the twin obstacles of the stagnant large publishers and the giant book-selling chains with their thrust- hold on the market. There is no doubt that publishing is in a great need of fresh energy and new attitudes – and this is fast on the way, in the shape of new, independent publishers who specialize, as all non-fiction publishers must, in publishing books within the fields that they know best.

Disillusioned at the whittling away of the academic community, the increasing take- overs by the majors, and the growing distance between author and publisher, we took the plunge and set up a new publishing company a few years ago. But we had to first ask ourselves why this seemingly mammoth undertaking seemed worthwhile. The answer was clear: satisfaction at being able to facili- tate the organic process of taking a book from idea to reader.

Small publishers with a small number of staff cannot expect to be able to han- dle every aspect of publishing. One of the most important factor that gave us the confi- dence to go for it was that we were able to contract with a specialized marketing agency to help us publicise and distrib- ute our books, deal with the complexi- ties of warehousing and help raise our profile on the academic conference cir- cuit. We also took inspiration from a variety of models such as that of Hip- pocrene Press, a small and highly focused press that has been going since the early seventies. This New York-based company has refused to compromise and has steadily developed a wide-rang- ing popular list that includes phrase- books, cookbooks and dictionaries for more than 120 languages at the time of writing. It is hard to think of any other publisher today who offers that many languages actively in print. Our own objectives are simple: to nar- row the gap between writer and read- er. From the first page to the last, every writer involved at every stage. The accepted idea is that small publishers are much more nimble than large commercial or academic publishers – being able to turn manuscripts into books more quickly, being better able to deal with unusual projects, and most important of all, being in a better position to give per- sonal service to authors. Being small obviously means being without huge staff, and that again means that most staff and many freelancers must be able to fill more than one role. Our commissioning editors must also do the work of copy editors and proof- readers, our designers must also act as typesetters and print buyers – and nobody gets much of a salary, but the bonus is that absolutely everyone can be involved in guiding the business forward.

This inter-weaving of roles is probably the real reason that small publishers can be quick off the mark. It is possible to achieve real team spirit where everyone can get personally invested in each book project and has the opportunity to make a significant difference to the way the busi- ness develops. But all is not rosy. The level of influence of everyone involved in the business also means that small publishers are at risk of one of the main players is incapacitated. And the small profit margins together with the need to invest every available penny in new titles in order to build up a healthy backlist means we are more at the mercy of the market than older, established presses.

Bringing new and small also means we need to work hard to ensure that authors and readers happy with what we do. For instance, two common complaints we hear from authors concerns illustrations and book pricing. One of our writers was told by a major multinational publisher that he could have a maximum of ten illustrations for his book, but it would rather it was less than five. Flexibility here is a obvious way of new to distinguish itself as today’s technology means authors can have as many black and white illustrations as they like at no extra printing cost. On pricing, we are only too aware that any publisher has to be in a better position to give per- sonal service to authors. Being small means we can get personally invested in each book project, and they expect many book proposals that deserve success. But rather selfishly, it also means we up, because it means there will always be a place for the likes of us.

In many ways what ultimately counts is communication – with authors as well as with readers. In a world where cor- porate anonymity seems to rule, we would like to think we’re putting a bit of heart back into the business.

This list of books is not exhaustive, as it was not possible to estimate the exact number produced on the internet with its numerous formats such as e-books and online journals. The mixed blessing of internet making it impossible to estimate. That brings its own problems, especially for bookhounds, who can hardly be expected to keep track of every title, although for readers there is the mixed blessing of internet bookshops such as Amazon.

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