and fiscal policy to keep the economy on an even keel is profoundly conservative politically, contrary to the usual impression. It allows the free enterprise system to work well.

Scientists must be dismayed as well as amused by the constant wrangling among schools of thought in economics. From the inside these disputes are fun. But at stake is the prosperity of the country. I wish we could agree on some fundamentals. Eldridge Cleaver in his radical days commented that watching the political struggle in the United States is like being a passenger on an airplane diving toward the ground while two madmen struggle for the controls. The economic policy debate must seem the same way to most people. I understand Cleaver is now praying a lot. Perhaps that's the rational response.

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The Book Industry

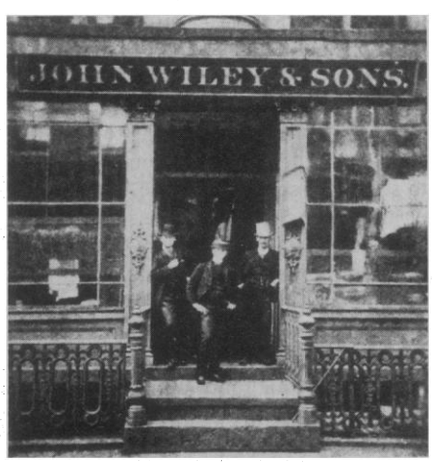
Books. The Culture and Commerce of Publishing. LEWIS A. COSER, CHARLES KADUSHIN, and WALTER W. POWELL. Basic Books, New York, 1982. xiv, 412 pp. $19.

Most of the literature about book publishing has been written by insiders—by publishers, editors, and others in the industry, including the trade press. There is no lack of engaging reminiscences, letters, how-to-do-it volumes, and reports on current trends. But outsiders have had little to say about how the publishing world works and the role of book publishing in the nation's intellectual life. The singular contribution of Coser, Kadushin, and Powell is to offer such an outsider's view of the industry—this one from the perspective of sociologists.

Their account should strike most insiders as a fair and informative one that confirms and, in many ways, broadens their own judgments. Readers who do not know much about publishing should find this book an eye-opener. It won't give them a complete picture of the book industry because the authors have chosen to exclude fiction from their inquiry, as well as such publishing concerns as copyright, book manufacturing, and computer technology, but it will tell them a great deal that is interesting and informative.

On balance, the authors take an optimistic view of the present and future of the book industry. They are struck more by the continuities than by the disruptions. The "tensions between commerce and culture," the epidemic of take-overs of distinguished independent publishers by conglomerates, the paperback revolution, the spread of chain bookstores—they all have precedents. Publishers have always had to be good businessmen as well as astute judges of manuscripts. Mergers have long been part of the publishing scene, and, if some publishers bought out by conglomerates have soon departed in rage, a high proportion of their employees report that they are pleased by higher salaries and benefits and the prospect of greater stability that appears to be offered by bigger firms over the long run. There are problems in book publishing—and perhaps a little madness in the multimillion-dollar bidding for best-seller paperback rights and the practice of shredding half of the mass-market paperbacks produced as part of the procedure for getting credit for unsold copies. But there are no crises.

Perhaps not everyone will be persuaded by the authors' relaxed perspective. The long-run effects of take-overs by conglomerates may not be the same as those of mergers between publishers. The implications of computer technology and the electronic revolution, which have not been taken into account, may not be fully appreciated. There may be reasons for serious concern about the prospect that half of the retail bookstore trade will soon be controlled by two chains, Walden and B. Dalton, which together already own more than 1000 stores. But the authors' point of view is certainly a reasonable one.



A New York publishing house in the 1880's.

A persistent theme throughout the book is the difficulty of making generalizations that are useful and that will stand up in the swirl of diversity that characterizes the industry. Indeed, this is not so much a single industry as an assemblage of industries—for textbooks, trade books, scholarly and professional books, and mass-market paperbacks. As the study makes clear, the sectors differ from each other greatly in the way they acquire manuscripts, produce books, and market them.

This diversity carries over to almost all phases of the industry. One gets the impression that almost any judgment invites a rejoinder or a qualification. How important are book reviews to the sale of a book? It all depends—what kinds of books, which review media, and so on.

A chapter on women in publishing—written by Michele Caplette rather than by one of the major authors—illustrates the conflicting trends. It is easy for women to find employment in the industry, and two out of three jobs in book publishing are held by women. But on the other hand the jobs they hold are generally dead-end, poorly paid positions with a high turnover.

On the bright side, an increasing proportion of women are moving at last into better-paying, more responsible positions in advertising and promotion, as acquisition editors and as managers of subsidiary rights. They are becoming visibly influential, unlike the few women who wielded some power in the past behind the scenes as assistants to publishers or as wives and sisters in family-owned firms. Nevertheless, the chapter concludes that women are still predominately at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy, and though they may be doing better than women in many other industries, such as television, they are only beginning to penetrate the ranks of the top executives. The best of them, concludes the author, can probably find greater opportunity by leaving publishing and becoming literary agents.

As sociologists, the authors say that their perspective differs from that of other outsiders, such as economists or literary critics, because they are "particularly attentive to the personal and organizational relations that nourish books." To illuminate these relationships they draw on the results of sample surveys, formal and informal interviews, and firsthand

observations of people at work. They have made good use of published sources as well. There is a ring of authenticity to their account.

Their special emphasis on the people in publishing leads them to give a rather detailed analysis of the role of networks and circles in transferring information and getting things done. Like insiders, they stress the effectiveness of connections, but they are more keenly aware of the limitations and breakdowns in some networks that are taken for granted. Ties among scholarly editors are close largely because they work with authors who are in the same circle. Trade book editors have looser ties with each other but strong ones with literary agents. One implication of the role of connections is stressed for aspiring authors: "If the reader who is unfamiliar with publishing takes but one message away from this book, it should be that formal channels of manuscript submission are the very last resort of would-be authors. To get a book published, recommendation through an informal circle or network is close to being an absolute necessity." (The book jacket for this study also confirms, if unintentionally, the role of connections. Of the three blurbs touting the book, one was written by the former president of the firm that published the book, one by an author whose work has also been published by the same firm, and the third by a distinguished scholar whose work is favorably cited. That all of the comments may be merited and objectively derived is beside the point.)

The epilogue, entitled "Publishers as gatekeepers of ideas," expands on a metaphor that appears in the introduction. It is the least persuasive part of the book.

The gatekeeper metaphor attracted attention some 30 years ago in a study of how a wire news editor on a small-town newspaper decides what stories to use and what ones to discard—and thereby determines what readers will find in their papers. In their introduction, the authors point out that they began their study believing that the metaphor was also applicable to book publishers. Their research led them to conclude that it didn't fully describe the role of publishers, since publishers are also shapers of ideas. Moreover, they came to recognize that book reviewers and even booksellers also function as gatekeepers. Nevertheless they continued to see some merit in the metaphor.

The epilogue, however, attempts to convert the metaphor into a major theme and ascribe to it far greater significance than it merits. An incongruity becomes quickly apparent when the metaphor is labored. The image of "channels and floodgates" and of publishers operating "sluice gates for ideas" suggests that publishers are engaged in deciding how much paper is to pass through, not what ideas are to be selected for dissemination.

But there are more substantive objections. The authors concede that "so much junk flows from the presses each year as to cast doubt on publishers' efficiency as gatekeepers." Still they cling to the metaphor, arguing that a selection process is inescapable since a publisher receives so many more manuscripts than he can publish. "However it occurs—by literary agent, or academic broker, or by an editorial assistant reading the slush pile—gatekeeping is an organizational necessity." Thus the control over the flow of work in a firm is mistaken for control over the flow of ideas in a society.

Also blurred is the distinction between two selection processes. A publisher determines what his firm will publish, not the fate of a manuscript. It is not at all clear that publishers collectively block ideas from being published. A manuscript rejected by one house is submitted to another. One survey of scholarly authors found that few book-length manuscripts fail to get published. Four or five submissions may be required, but the overwhelming majority of nonfiction manuscripts are accepted eventually. this is true—and Coser *et al.* offer r data of their own about the proportion manuscripts that are accepted—th widely held impression that the numb of unpublished book-length manuscrip greatly exceeds the published ones is least partly illusory. The same man script is counted several times.

There is an even more fundament objection to the metaphor of the boo publisher as a gatekeeper of ideas. A many observers of scholarly commun cation have pointed out, ideas do n enter the intellectual world only throu books. Especially in the sciences, b increasingly in other fields as well, ide are first disseminated by journal article by preprints of journal articles, or b photocopies of papers circulated to co leagues for comment.

This is not to deny the importance the role of the publisher or to denigra the importance of books, which the a thors rightly call "the most permaner reasoned, and extensive repository the thoughts of civilized man." Howe er, gatekeeping is not a good descripti of what publishers do, or an apt indicat of what this book is all about. And th fate of an idea is determined not by gatekeeper but by its strength in an op competition among ideas.

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Questions of Ability

The Rise and Fall of National Test Scores. GILBERT R. AUSTIN and HERBERT GARBER, Eds. Academic Press, New York, 1982. xviii, 270 pp. $23. Educational Psychology.

Scores on educational tests are not fixed, immutable numbers. Not only are the scores subject to errors of measurement, changes in them can be produced by the growth and decline of individual abilities and other personal characteristics assessed by tests. School officials, parents, and other interested parties usually keep an eye on yearly rises and drops in the test scores of schoolchildren, and decisions concerning both individual instruction and curricular modification are prompted by such changes. Periodic fluctuations in aptitude and achievement test scores are of less concern than consistent yearly declines, because the latter signal a progressive worsening situation.

It became increasingly obvious duri the 1970's that scores on certain tests cognitive ability, and on college entran examinations in particular, were decli ing annually in the United States. Stat tical analyses of Scholastic Aptitu Test (SAT) scores revealed that me SAT score increased slightly from 19 to 1963. However, mean SAT-Verb score decreased from 478 in 1963 to 4 in 1968 and to 424 in 1980. Mean SA Mathematical score also declined, though not quite as severely, from 502 1963 to 492 in 1968 and to 466 in 198 Score declines occurred for both sex and across ethnic groups, but men co tinued to score higher than women a whites higher than blacks.

Yearly declines in test scores have n