



Osnos, Peter

From: W- Q [WQ@wilsoncenter.org]
Sent: Monday, November 30, 2009 1:22 PM
To: Osnos, Peter
Subject: RE: Wilson Quarterly inquiry

Peter,

Thank you so much for providing us with this addition to our letters section. It is both thoughtful and thought-provoking.

Just need an address for your promised subscription.

Sincerely,
Steve

>>> "Osnos, Peter" <peter.osnos@publicaffairsbooks.com> 11/26/2009 8:53
>>> AM >>>

Steve, Thanks for sending the articles.

Your thoughtful essays on the future of the book summarize the various views on whether and how we will continue to access information and entertainment in printed form. In fact, today's discussion about the transformative effect of technology continues a process that is eternal. Cave paintings, scrolls, the codex, the teletype, the telephone, radio and television have all preceded the computer and the internet in determining how we access data. As a book publisher and information entrepreneur, I have come to believe that the essence of our latter-day re-invention is choice. The creators of content serve it up and the consumers make the decision about how to access it. Books are increasingly available in traditional printed form as hardcovers or paperbacks. They can be printed on demand. They are e-books available on reading devices or as PDFs on computers. They can be downloaded as audios or purchased in CDs. Not all books are distributed in all versions, but they can be and over time it will be increasingly common to repurpose the digital file for whatever format the reader finds most convenient. In 2005, The MacArthur and Carnegie Foundations supported a project we called Caravan, which has enabled leading university and non-profit publishers to master the practice of multi-platform publishing of books. The goal of the project was conveyed in this message: Good Books. Any Way You Want Them. Now. As for the business model for publishing in the digital age, it is important to remember that we neither have subscribers nor advertising, so unlike newspapers and magazines, we won't lose them. Technology is our ally in improving access and bringing down costs. There will always be a tug-of-war among all those in the chain from author through distributors to consumers in which every one focuses on their particular self-interest, particularly when it comes to revenue and price. Technology will shape the outcome of that tussle. But the market will, as it always does, set the value of the goods.

Information and entertainment are indispensable commodities in the organization of civilization. We are clearly at a major juncture in the ways these goods are made available. Whatever the outcome in the short term, books in various forms will endure -- in your hand, on the screen, in your ear. The choice will increasingly be yours to make about where, when and how to take advantage of them.

Peter Osnos is Founder of PublicAffairs books, executive director of The Caravan Project, vice-chair of The Columbia Journalism Review and chair of the advisory board of the Chicago News Cooperative.