



In Cold Type: Overcoming the Book Crisis

Leonard Shatzkin

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During the nineteen seventies and early eighties, the trade book publishing industry faced financial and philosophical problems of a magnitude unparalleled in its 342 years of existence. It was believed that without the undertaking of urgent and farreaching reforms, the profits of publishing houses would decline to a level that would make the survival of many old and established firms extremely doubtful. The expansion of the major bookselling chains, combined with antiquated distribution and marketing methods, would cause large numbers of independent booksellers to close. Authors of talent, vision, and intellect would find it more difficult to be published than ever before. And readers would grow more jaded by a glut of formula books, or more frustrated trying to find that special title that suits their needs. Leonard Shatzkin's "In Cold Type" explores the reasons behind that decade's crisis in publishing. Neither an essay about the perils and personalities of the best-seller list syndrome, nor a bland sociological study, "In Cold Type" offers a penetrating critique of exactly what was wrong with the nuts and bolts of publishing and with the ingrained attitudes that resisted change and reform. Backed by more than thirty-five years of experience in executive positions at major publishing houses, Leonard Shatzkin discusses publishing's nineteenth-century methods of distribution, the marginal profitability of booksellers, the unnecessary evils of remaindering, the mountainous waste in book production, the decline of the editorial function to a clerkship, the collapse of the paperback book publishers, what authors need to know about their publishers' "skills," and why the commonly heard complaint "We publish too many books!" is simply not true.

Shatzkin not only saw what was, he also saw what could be, and offered a number of new solutions that helped the book industry overcome its malaise. Solutions that were immediate, practical, and necessary. Solutions that were, above all, essential for America to continue to have a vital publishing industry dedicated to free expression in the marketplace of ideas.

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