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# The Late Age Of Print: Everyday Book Culture From Consumerism To Control



## Synopsis

Ted Striphas argues that, although the production and propagation of books have undoubtedly entered a new phase, printed works are still very much a part of our everyday lives. With examples from trade journals, news media, films, advertisements, and a host of other commercial and scholarly materials, Striphas tells a story of modern publishing that proves, even in a rapidly digitizing world, books are anything but dead. From the rise of retail superstores to Oprah's phenomenal reach, Striphas tracks the methods through which the book industry has adapted (or has failed to adapt) to rapid changes in twentieth-century print culture. Barnes & Noble, Borders, and .com have established new routes of traffic in and around books, and pop sensations like Harry Potter and the Oprah Book Club have inspired the kind of brand loyalty that could only make advertisers swoon. At the same time, advances in digital technology have presented the book industry with extraordinary threats and unique opportunities. Striphas's provocative analysis offers a counternarrative to those who either triumphantly declare the end of printed books or deeply mourn their passing. With wit and brilliant insight, he isolates the invisible processes through which books have come to mediate our social interactions and influence our habits of consumption, integrating themselves into our routines and intellects like never before.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This collection of historical and commercial analysis should fascinate those seriously involved with book culture and/or the industry. (Publishers Weekly) Forget the premature obituaries for books and

reading. Striphas insists that books remain a vital presence in the twenty-first century. (Booklist)The Late Age of Print is an important history of the book and their impact on (mostly) American culture. (Sacramento Book Review)It is rare to say of a university press hardcover that it is a "must-read," but for those interested in the confluence of culture and economics as it relates to books, that is what The Late Age of Print is. (Richard Nash Critical Flame)This book is a gold mine of information and thought about book culture in the 20th and 21st centuries. (Gwen M. Gregory Information Today)A solid work of scholarship that fills in several significant gaps... Highly Recommended. (Choice)A magnificent achievement that makes a compelling series of arguments about the continuing importance of books and book publishing. (Publishing Research Quarterly)Striphas does an excellent job. (Alan Jacobs Books and Culture)What is it that you purchase when you buy a book? In describing the answer, [Striphas]is admirably clear about the choices publishers or booksellers made, and why. (Technology and Culture)

The Late Age of Print is exciting, clear, topical, interesting, and important. Ted Striphas has a voracious curiosity and is a great finder of material. How many of us have reflected on the history of bookshelves or have bothered to understand the mechanics of ISBN numbers or their political-economic-intellectual significance? Who knew the full story behind Oprah's Book Club, , or Barnes & Noble? This book provides a fine overview of the best English-language scholarship on books and print culture. Tackling the broad meaning of books over the past century, it says something broader about life in our era. Striphas gives the best integrated overview of the book in our moment and participates in public debates about education, literature, culture, and capitalism. (John Durham Peters, University of Iowa, and author of Courting the Abyss: Free Speech and the Liberal Tradition) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Should be required reading for every course on publishing.

I thought that the subject matter might be a bit dry, but Striphas is an engaging author and this delightful read is full of interesting information about how we consume books.

This interesting and insightful book is a guided tour of the production and distribution of texts in the late age of print. After an introduction that is probably best skipped if you are a general reader, Striphas begins with a concrete investigation into how e-books are produced and disseminated. Striphas might say that people make books, but not in the circumstances of their own choosing.

Throughout the work, he is interested in the larger context and avoids jeremiads about the death of the book, authenticity and so on. In the chapter on e-books, he gets into the technological and legal changes that were necessary for the creation of e-books. In the next chapter, he argues that big box bookstores may not be killing small independent bookstores and that in some cases (he uses Durham, NC as an example) they may actually be used as part of an attempt to redress long-standing racial inequalities. A chapter on print and internet distribution, which deserves to be widely read, includes a fascinating history of the ISBN. Did you know that the 978 prefix stands for Bookland, the mythical country from whence all books hail? My favorite chapter, though, is the last one, on Harry Potter. Here, he uses the concept of transfiguration, first elaborated by J.K. Rowling, to trace how Harry Potter has changed when translated (not always in authorized ways) into Chinese, Russian, Belarusian and other languages. This is a real tour de force and worth getting the book for. A conclusion restates the themes of the chapters but doesn't add much new. This is an excellent investigation of new trends in book publishing, distribution and partly on reception. I would definitely recommend it to those interested in those topics.

In *The Late Age of Print*, Ted Striphas sets his main approach as a nuanced examination of American book culture in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In doing so, he challenges crisis discourses and laments for the loss of books. Striphas presents a well written, accessible, anecdotal, and effective critique of ideologies behind consumption, control, and transformations in American book culture. Much of this study relies on the cultural history that Striphas establishes from the outset, emphasizing "the history and conditions by which books have become ubiquitous and mundane social artifacts in and of our own time" (4). By charting book culture from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first, Striphas lays out "a changed and changing mode of production; new technological products and processes; shifts in law and jurisprudence; the proliferation of culture and the rise of cultural politics; and a host of sociological transformations, among many other factors" (5). He does so by focusing on various aspects of American consumerism, the book industry, legal history, media relationships, all circulating around attitudes about the value of books in the everyday. With these topics as the mainstay themes of the book, Striphas takes up the topics of American bibliophilia, digital media, big-box bookstores (especially Barnes and Noble), online marketing (especially .com), Oprah's Book Club, and Harry Potter--all centerpieces of his cultural examinations. Ultimately, he demonstrates, through several case studies, "how printed books and electronic media can complement one another" through a type of "synergy" in culture (188). Yet he does not insist on ignoring the transformations that have taken place and will

continue to occur. He equally insists that consumers must be aware of the ways in which control--by the industry, marketers, publishers, as well as consumers and various aspects of popular culture--underpin the most important facets of book culture. Indeed, the polemical features of Striphas's book emphasize the need for continual reconsideration of these issues to best understand the various complexities of intermedial relationships. This is particularly the case for his approach to intellectual rights laws in a global economy and with emergent digital concerns. All of this is offered with well-balanced and salient critiques of the past, the present, and the future.

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