



The Book Trade Will Not Become a Dinosaur

By Ashish Amos

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I believe the printed word is here to stay. Every new technology might seem like an initial threat, but none has ever permanently replaced conventional book trade methods. In the 1990s, after the introduction of ebooks, prophets of doom cried wolf and virtually packed off Gutenberg. A name was even coined for the “goodbye Gutenberg syndrome.” All this is well said in the context of the developed world, but the developed world, sadly, still remains a minority.

The Majority World, which makes for two thirds of the world’s population, still hold firmly to the printed book and to conventional bookstores. New technologies might emerge as winners for a while, but conventional technologies reinvent themselves and bounce back. The radio, a technology from the 30s (back in the second millennium), is an important example of this.

I talk of India, which of course is changing rapidly and is quickly emerging as a global consumer market. However, one cannot ignore the fact that India is not just the 2 percent English-literate populace. Of the little billion people who form about a sixth

of the world’s population, 55 percent are still illiterate.

How, then, can we talk of technology? More than 300 million Indians still live below the poverty line. Many cannot afford a single meal a day, eking out a bare existence on a dollar a day. They do not have a 24/7, 365-day-a-year power supply. How, then, can we talk of connectivity and all that?

You cannot ignore the Majority World, which still depends on conventional book trade methodologies. Neither can you bypass it, for it totals up to the world’s largest marketplace numerically.

We will not see the end of print. This will not happen, at least in our lifetimes. The book trade will not become a dinosaur for another 100 years or so.

The printed Word of the Good News of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will continue to sell conventionally throughout the world. The Holy Bible will maintain its lead as the world’s bestselling book. Amen.

The Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCK) [<http://ispck.org.in/>] in Delhi, India began as a branch of SPCK, London, which had been serving the church in India since 1711. The ISCPK was registered as an autonomous organization in 1958 and is now a leading Christian publishing house in India, with bookstores and distributors throughout the country.

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