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Trade Paperback

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The Trade Paperback Phenomenon: Its Evolution and Impact

by **Nat Bodian** (Publishers Marketing Consultant)

(The following is adapted and condensed from the *Joy of Publishing* © 1993 by **Nat Bodian**, a book subtitled "*Fascinating Facts, Anecdotes, Curiosities, and Historic Data About Books and Authors, Editors, and Publishers, Bookmaking and Bookselling.*" The recently-completed work has no publisher as yet).

One of the more interesting developments in publishing, in the second half of the twentieth century, has been the evolution and growth of the 'trade' paperback. This is a class of books identical to hardcover editions and published simultaneously with them, but issued in paper covers by the original publishers. They are usually sold through bookstores, rather than mass-market paperback outlets, and at

greatly-reduced prices from their hardcover counterparts.

Trade paperbacks have vastly increased the affordability of books not normally within the range of classroom textbook use. They are used both as texts and on recommended reading lists as supplementary texts. Trade paperbacks useful for the college classroom are sometimes called 'egg head' paperbacks. They are likely to be general works on subjects taught at colleges and universities and may be stocked in depth at college bookstores.

The advantage to the originating publisher is that the book is printed as part of the book's normal pressrun and, therefore at little added cost. The advantage to the bookstore is that the book can be obtained at trade discounts,

usually much higher than textbook discounts. The advantage to the author is that the author receives full royalty. The advantage to the student is that the price is usually about half the cost of the hardcover edition.

The trade paperback originated in April 1953 with the introduction of Anchor Books by Doubleday and were sold through traditional book wholesalers and directly to bookstores.

Early Anchor books were priced at 85 cents to \$1.25, considered high prices in the early 1950s. Yet, the first four Anchor books, each with a 10,000 copy printing, sold out within two weeks.

The era of the trade paperback had begun.☛

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