

Publishing in Catalan in the Camp de Tarragona *

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Summary

Analysis of publishing in the Tarragona area between 1996 and 2006. A study about the development of publishers and their production volume. The work also includes a brief glance into the future about development possibilities

Keywords

Edition, publishing house, book, Catalan, Camp de Tarragona

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1. The world of publishing

It was going to be an apocalypse, the end of books as we had always known them. The e-book had been born, a device that would make it possible to read and store an infinite amount of works. All around, it was claimed that in the not too distant future paper would inevitably be replaced by the screen, and that bookshops and libraries would become webpages where users would be able to download files at the touch of a button. Without opening hours, from anywhere in the world, with ease and for a small fee. But it didn't happen.

In the same way that the year 2000 was not accompanied by the thousand and one futuristic advances that had been forecast a few years previously, today we can categorically affirm that e-books have not replaced the habit of reading (and, above all, purchasing) traditional books. For the time being.¹

However, this does not mean that there have not been major changes. In some thirty years, printing presses have changed from linotype to offset, and from the latter to digital publishing, which is now standard in most printing presses and preprinting processes. Furthermore, a significant new trend has given rise to a new way of working: in the last few decades there has been a transformation from publishing large production runs of few titles (relatively speaking) to smaller production runs of many titles.² And this trend has been more evident in the case of Catalan literature, given that the potential readership is not the same as for other languages. Consequently, technological change has helped optimise resources and tighten budgets.

However, the work of publishing houses has also been transformed. Publishing has gone from being a craft industry, with names and surnames (always wrapped in a cloak of cultural prestige), to become cogs in the machinery of anonymous multinationals where the only thing that seems to matter is profit, as books such as Schiffrin's *L'edició sense editors* clearly illustrate.

And the Catalan publishing industry is no exception. Small and medium-sized publishing houses have been absorbed by multinationals, even though the individual brand names of all of them have been preserved. La Magrana was bought by RBA, Columna and Destino by Planeta, and a major shareholding of Grup 62, the majority shareholding of which, until recently, was owned by La Caixa, is now owned by Planeta and Enciclopèdia Catalana.

Conflicting views have been expressed on this latest business trend, as is the case with similar event in other markets. The range of opinions goes from the most pessimistic, owing to the cultural monopoly it implies, to the most optimistic, which believe that the combined efforts of the Catalan and Spanish publishing markets represented by these conglomerates will be highly beneficial to sales. The former view predominates among editors of smaller publishing houses, whereas the latter, just happens to be held by the directors of large companies. As always, the end result is likely to be between the two extremes, and may only be evaluated objectively over time, once we have seen the results in the medium-term. In any case, what is clear is that, in a few years' time, the publishing industry will be quite different to the one we know today.³

Even so, unlike in other markets, it is worth noting that the birth of large conglomerates occurred after the sector had become that "too much was being published", a situation that was being

nourished by the remorseless battle to obtain a small space on the new titles table in bookshops⁴, which led to a sensation that the sector was in crisis.

It is also worth noting that many publishing houses based in Catalonia, which until recently have only published in Spanish, have now begun to publish titles and collections in Catalan, having become aware of a market segment they had ignored in the past and which can increase revenue considerably. Good examples of this are Random House Mondadori with the Rosa dels Vents collection, Anaya with Càlam or Tusquets with l'Ull de Vidre.

Another factor that has increased the total number of titles published is self-publishing. Although there have always been authors who have published their own works, technological advances have reduced the cost of short production runs, and this has increased the number of self-published works in recent years, above all because of the facilities offered by many companies.⁵

Finally, we should mention the proliferation of Catalan literary awards that offer the prize of publishing the work. While the period of recovery of Catalan culture and language was an important factor for publishing in Catalan, after so many years this trend cannot be justified by claiming that there is a lack of capital investment in titles written in Catalan. Instead we should think that the creation and maintenance of a literary award has, for many institutions, become the only way of promoting literary creation.

But has this new panorama affected publishing houses that are geographically located a long way from the centre of the Catalan publishing network? We are making gradual progress.

2. Publishing in the Camp de Tarragona

Taking as a reference the *Kesse* special edition dedicated to Catalan literature in the Camp de Tarragona, published ten years ago, there has been a clear out of the titles published in Catalan in the province of Tarragona from 1996 to 2006 appearing on the online database of the Spanish ISBN Agency⁶. It is evident that books have been published without this identification number,⁷ yet in spite of the fact that we are starting with data that does not entirely reflect the real situation, the comparative results that we can extract are representative of the overall situation.

With regard to the regional area of the sample we have chosen the province of Tarragona because although it is possible to make a geographical division into the *Camp de Tarragona* and *Terres de l'Ebre* regions, such a division cannot be represented directly in the publishing world. The reason is that publishing houses of the Camp de Tarragona have considered the works of authors and institutions of the Terres de l'Ebre region as part of their own geographical publishing region.

2.1 Private publishing houses

Below, we will consider in detail the evolution of titles in three private publishing houses: Edicions El Mèdol, Cossetània Edicions and Arola Editors (from the year of entry in the publishing market). Although other publishing houses exist, the volume of titles they publish bears no comparison to the quantity published by these three (more than 54% of the total number of books published

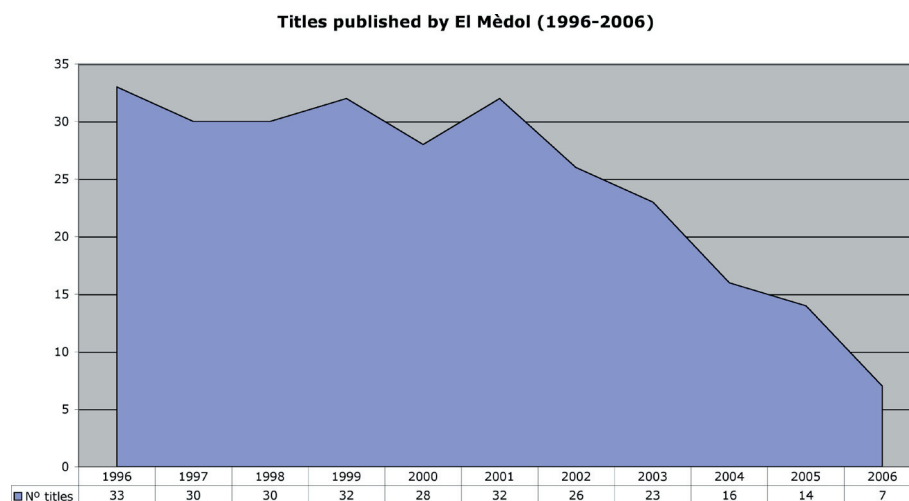
during the period 1996 to 2006) or, for the time being, the length of time they have been involved in publishing.

Although they are not treated individually, there are three private initiatives in Catalan worthy of mention: Silva Editorial⁸ in Tarragona, Pragma Edicions⁹ in Reus and Aeditors¹⁰ in Perelló.

2.1.1 EDICIONS EL MÈDOL

Located in Tarragona, Edicions El Mèdol is the doyen of publishing house in the Camp de Tarragona. In the article by Josep Bargalló¹¹ in the special edition of *Kesse* ten years ago it appeared as the most important (and virtually the only) private initiative with sufficient drive and ambition within the Catalan speaking regions.

However, the passing of time and market conditions have caused Edicions El Mèdol to concentrate its efforts on a single range of publications. Thus, it has gone from publishing books of all genres (in particular gastronomy and romantic literature, among others) to publishing solely titles related to popular and traditional Catalan culture. This strategy explains the decrease in the number of titles published in recent years, although it also implies a greater degree of loyalty among a specific number of readers and the survival of the business in the long term.



The average number of titles published each year during the period 1996-2006 is 24.6, quite a respectable figure, even if it is forecast that this average will be maintained or fall owing to the new publishing policy it is adopting, focused on publishing quality titles within a very specific area of culture.

2.1.2 COSSETÀNIA EDICIONS

In 2006 Cossetània Edicions celebrated its tenth anniversary. It did so with an event held in the capital of Catalonia, Barcelona, which is indicative of the general scope of its publications, despite being based in Valls.

Although its early publications focused on the local environment (and it continues to publish such works) and on a range of publications on rambling, the evolution of its publishing strategy

has seen it move into other areas such as gastronomy (the «Àvia Remei»¹² factor is quite impressive if we consider the size of this publishing house) and narrative (publishing authors who do not usually appear in the catalogues of major publishing houses).

A project worth monitoring closely in the coming years is the Llectio brand of Spanish titles (which explains the apparent stagnation in production of recent years). Cossetània is doing the inverse of major publishing houses and has started translating its Catalan works into Spanish. Could this be a way for small Catalan publishing houses to guarantee economic viability? What is certain is that Catalan publishers have taken note of the project.

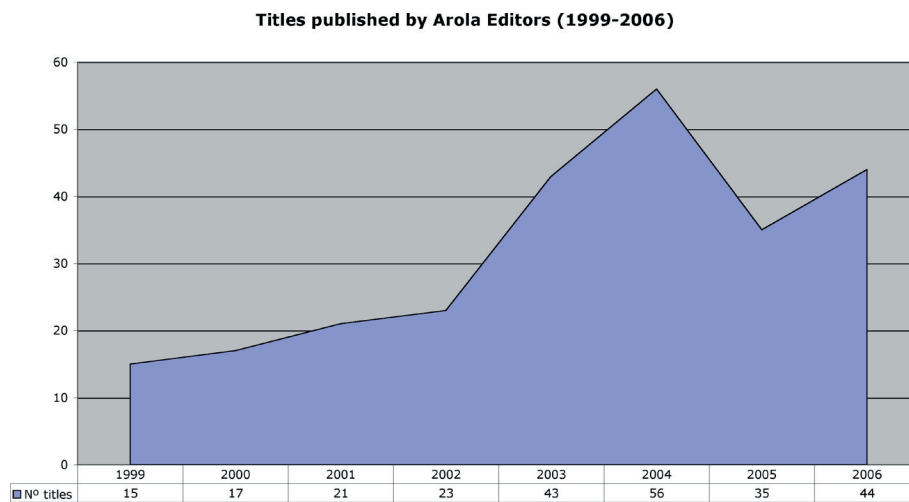


The average number of titles published during the period 1996-2006 is 46.5. It is, by far, the private publishing house that has published the most during the period analysed and is also the publishing house in the Camp de Tarragona with the greatest projection in Catalan language thanks, among other things, to the sales success of some of its titles.

2.1.3 AROLA EDITORS

Founded in 1999 under the auspices of a printing press, Arola Editors is the publishing house in the city of Tarragona that currently publishes the most.

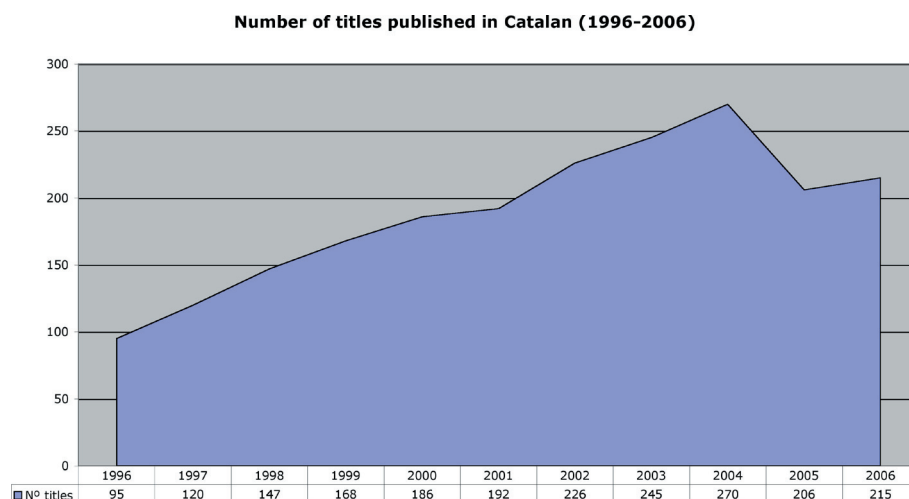
Although it has not moved away from local and narrative publications, it has concentrated its efforts on collections of drama and poetry (it owns the publishing rights of *Gent del Llamp*,¹³ for example). This means that its impact on the publishing market outside of the Camp de Tarragona is smaller (owing to the lower impact of such genres within the market), however the painstaking manner in which its books are published (in poetry verse is combined with pictorial works) has made it a widespread reference of quality and this is recognised every time there is a review of Catalan publishing houses.



The average number of titles published during the period 1999-2006 was 31.7 and the trend suggests that this average will continue to rise in the coming years.

2.2 Titles published and publishers during the 1996-2000 period

During the period analysed the number of titles published in provincial terms has continued to rise: increasing from 95 titles in 1996 to 215 in 2006. There has only been one downturn, in 2005, when 64 fewer titles were published than the previous year (from which a recovery is now taking place). An explanation for this lies in the self-regulation of the publishing sector with regard to new titles (which we referred to earlier), which in Catalonia occurred in 2004. It seems that the measure has had a concentric effect since Pagès Editors, of Lleida, experienced a similar evolution during this period.¹⁴

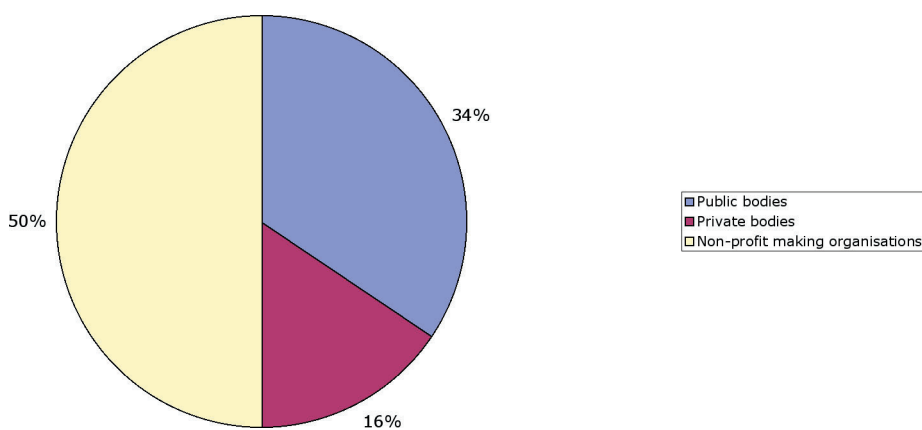


The average number of titles published during the period 1996-2006 was 188.2, of which 102.8 (over 54%) corresponded to the average of the sum of titles published by the three private publishing houses: Edicions El Mèdol, Cossetània Edicions and Arola Editors.

Now let us discuss the other publishing houses that account for the remainder of published titles. Between 1996 and 2006 a great variety of entities published books, but it should be said that the vast majority published only a few titles a year.¹⁵

We have classified the different entities into three groups. On the one hand, the private publishing houses, like the ones we have analysed so far. On the other hand, we have grouped together all the entities that have published titles that are related to some type of public body, such as city councils, regional councils, museums, teaching institutes or the university. And finally, we have grouped together the non-profit making associations, a group made up of entities such as study circles or institutes, reading centres or cultural associations, most of them local or regional.

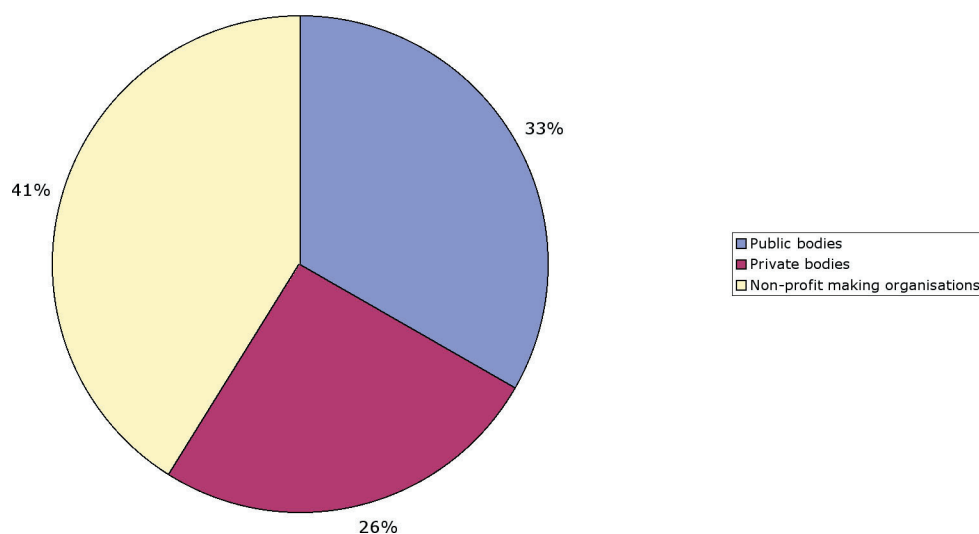
Percentages of publishing houses in 1996



N° of publishers in 1996

Public bodies	11
Private bodies	5
Non-profit making organisations	16
Total	32

Percentages of publishing houses in 2006

**Nº of publishers in 2006**

Public bodies	13
Private bodies	10
Non-profit making organisations	16
Total	39

It is clear that the number and percentage of private publishing houses has increased throughout the period, something we should consider to be very positive, firstly because of the diversity of publications this will lead to, and secondly because it proves the sustained growth in demand in the market.

As far as the public institutions are concerned, although these are numerous, it is worth noting that they have very low levels of production (less than five titles a year), and in no case do they form part of a defined overall range of institutional publications, but instead are specific and sporadic publications. Perhaps we could except the Tarragona Studies Institute, however it is worth pointing out that since 1996, with just two titles published, it ended its publication output and its heir, Tarragona Provincial Council, basically publishes art exhibition catalogues.¹⁶

What is really significant is that the number of small non-profit making associations and bodies that publish works, which has not changed over the ten year period. Perhaps they do not have a large annual production (just one or two titles), yet their persistence in their task over this period cannot be denied (the majority of the local study centres that appeared on the list in 1996 also appear on the 2006 list).¹⁷ The work of such associations (such as the Reus Reading Centre or the Guillem Oliver Historical and Social Study Circle of the Camp de Tarragona, to quote two examples) makes up for the shortcomings of the public bodies in the Camp de Tarragona in terms of publishing, and fill a void in an admirable way, particularly if we consider that most of them have rather limited finances.

With regard to university publishing, in 2006 the Rovira i Virgili University (URV) finally decided, albeit tentatively for the moment, to start its own range of publications, through joint publications with the private publishing houses Arola Editors and Cossetània Edicions. There is plenty of potential for works: despite being one of the Catalan universities with the highest rates of articles per lecturer,¹⁸ it is worth noting that the majority of its output has been published in publications and journals that are external to the university. 15 years on from establishing itself as an independent body of the University of Barcelona, it still has a long way to go to reach the same level of in-house publications as that of other universities of a similar size and background, such as the University of Lleida or the Jaume I University of Castellón. In spite of everything, the outlook for the future in this regard is much brighter than it was ten years ago, and it is hoped that in the coming years the efforts that are being made now will bear fruit.

However, if the outlook is one of optimism for the university, the same cannot be said for the publications of public institutions. With some exceptions, such as the Publications of the Port of Tarragona, the outlook is bleak. And after the disappearance of the Tarragona Studies Institute (which reported to Tarragona Provincial Council), there has not been any local or provincial initiative to fill the void this has created. Only the immense and at all times voluntary work of non-profit making bodies and associations has managed to maintain output at a minimum, particularly as far as local history is concerned.

It is almost inexplicable (for want of a better word) that city councils with the economic power and cultural needs of Tarragona and Reus (and to a lesser degree Valls) do not have their own range of publications. The City Councils of Barcelona and Girona have their own publication services and Lleida City Council has produced publications through the Municipal Institute of Cultural Action. This must be due to the factor that differentiates Tarragona, since nobody seems surprised at this. The town and city councils of the Camp de Tarragona, both small and large, are accustomed to publishing books in conjunction with private publishing houses on a specific and sporadic basis; and what is acceptable and even laudable in small locations, because of a lack of resources, should not apply in large ones.

Finally, a significant statistic to bear in mind is the increase in author-publishers from 1996 to 2006, not only for the quantity this represents, but because of what this could become, since a clearly trend is now being established. In 1996 only four people on record who had published their own books and had requested an ISBN, yet in 2006 this figure had risen to eleven (an increase of 175%). It is clear that the application of new publishing technology, and the increased popularity and reduced cost of self-publishing over the last few years has had a major influence on this trend, and it is likely that this trend will increase dramatically in the years to come.

3. An uncertain future?

Having reviewed what has happened to publishing in the Camp de Tarragona, can we say that its future is uncertain? We could say that it is as uncertain as the future of publishing in Catalan in general.

Small and medium sized publishing houses have an indisputable share of the market, and however much the large publishing houses want to absorb them, they will always resist them. For proof of this, we only need see the growth and constant evolution of their publishing activity in the Camp de Tarragona.

These “small” publishing houses can afford themselves the luxury of working independently, without the constraints of being the appendage of a Spanish business structure. The voids and publishing ranges that need to be covered allow them to defend their own values and make a clear commitment towards quality and culture, and in favour of authors and titles that may not have any place in the “large” publishing houses.

This is not to say that the products of large publishing houses are devoid of quality and culture: they are simply different publishing products. It may be viable for a small publishing house to publish a work for which a short production run and profitability in the medium or long term is forecast, whereas large publishing houses are accustomed to working with larger production runs and, above all, quick profits. In such large structures, it is said that the life of the editor lasts three years: the first year to programme the titles, the second to put them on the market and the third the check their financial viability. By contrast, in small publishing houses the editor is always the same person, in the old style, making it possible to define a clear editorial policy in the long term.

However, I do not believe that the uncertain future of the Catalan publishing world can be attributed to the immediate presence of the entrepreneurial framework. In order to guarantee the future of publishing, it is necessary to concentrate on other actors represented in the work who are not taken into account to a sufficient degree. The readers and distributors.

The normal reading language, according to the Book Reading and Purchasing Habits in Catalonia of 2006 indicates that 20.1% read in Catalan, whereas 78.7% read in Spanish (different to the 2005 figures, which were 22.1% for Catalan and 77% for Spanish).

Furthermore, a recent report commissioned by the Association of Graduates in Philosophy and Letters of Catalonia warns that the study of literature in secondary school classrooms has decreased considerably, or has disappeared in practice.¹⁹ The problem has been aggravated in recent years by the arrival in classrooms of immigrants who do not understand Catalan, combined with a fall in the reading habits of students and a low level of Catalan among locals.

Thus, the present outlook is not very encouraging, and it is forecast that the immediate future will be even less so. Perhaps we should urgently increase reading rates in Catalan. It is clear that we have a considerable way to go if we want to do this, even if this is at the expense of direct aid to publishing houses.

The Catalans have started to build the house from the roof down (given the anomalous situation of our culture, everything has to be said), but perhaps it is time to reinforce the last base of the industry, the readers/purchasers. We need to recognise the work that is carried out by the network of public libraries, a Community ideal since the dawn of the 20th century, and which today is one of the largest in Europe in terms of extension and number. However, we need to seek

different resources, other ways of reaching out to citizens, since increasing the number of readers in Catalan would not only improve sales (and the culture of the nation), but also guarantee the survival of the industry without the need for financial aid.

If we want to increase reading rates in Catalan, one of things we should monitor is that the range of titles is as varied as possible (as much as our society is), and this is very difficult to achieve if there is not a diversity of publishing houses able to guarantee such an offer.

In order to maintain the current diversity of publishing (which, in spite of successive mergers of publishing houses has not decreased, we should remind ourselves), we need to guarantee the extensive distribution network of bookshops that exists today²⁰ unless we want to be in a situation similar to that of the North American market. However, everything indicates that there is little guarantee of this, since every year small bookshops are closing down (in cities and in towns), while at the same time sales are increasing in hypermarkets and chains. Can internet sites offer the solution for maintaining diversity? There are currently some interesting initiatives along these lines, projects which have associated the bookshops of various locations in order to sell over the Internet.

Only time will tell what will happen to the world of publishing in Catalan.

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Annexe

Publishers 1996

Ajuntament d'Ampostà
Ajuntament de Deltebre. Casa de Cultura
Ajuntament d'Horta de Sant Joan
Ajuntament de Reus
Associació Amics Mare de Déu de Loreto
Associació Cultural La Riuada
Associació Cultural Revista La Segarra
Associació Escola de Natura Cel Rogent
Associació d'Estudis Reusencs
Bibliòfils de Tarragona
Centre d'Estudis Alcoverencs
Centre d'Estudis de la Conca de Barberà
Cercle d'Estudis Històrics i Socials Guillem Oliver
Centre d'Estudis de la Ribera d'Ebre
Centre d'Estudis «Sinibald de Mas»
Centre d'Estudis de la Terra Alta
Centre de Lectura de Reus
Consell Comarcal de l'Alt Camp
Consell Comarcal del Baix Ebre
Consell Comarcal del Tarragonès
Cooperativa Gráfica Dertosense, S.L.
Diputació Provincial de Tarragona
Edicions Cossetània (Imatge-9, S.L.)
Edicions El Mèdol
Folch-Genius & Co.
Institut Estudis Tarraconenses Ramón Berenguer IV
Institut d'Estudis Vallencs
Institut Pere Mata
Museu Nacional Arqueològic (Tarragona)
Parròquia de Sant Joan Evangelista (Lilla)
TGD. Tarragona Disseny, S.L.
Universitat Rovira i Virgili. Servei de Publicacions

Publishers 2006

Aeditors
Ajuntament de Bot
Ajuntament de Reus
Ajuntament de Flix
Ajuntament de Tarragona
Arola Editors, S.L.
Associació Cultural Baixa Segarra
Associació Cultural L'Espona
Associació Cultural Lo Llaüt
Associació Cultural Sant Fructuós
Associació d'Estudis Reusencs
Cambra de la Propietat Urbana de Reus i Comarques
Centre de Lectura de Reus

Centre d'Esports del Perelló
Centre d'Estudis Canongins Ponç de Castellví
Cercle d'Estudis Històrics i Socials Guillem Oliver
Centre d'Estudis d'Investigació Històrica Baix-Maestrat Montsià
Centre d'Estudis de la Ribera d'Ebre
Consorti Memorial dels Espais de la Batalla de l'Ebre (COMEBE)
Edicions Cossetània (Imatge-9, S.L.)
Editorial La Torratxa
Editorial Nadal-Arcada S.L.
Ferve
Fundació Àngels Garriga de Mata
Fundació d'Estudis Socials i Nacionals Josep Recasens i Mercadé
Fundació Privada Liber
Grup d'Estudis i Comunicació Ambiental Graellsia
Institut d'Educació Secundària Els Alfacs
Institut d'Estudis Comarcals del Montsià
Institut Municipal de Museus de Reus
La Veu de l'Ebre, S.L.
Museu Arxiu de Montblanc
Museu Nacional Arqueològic (Tarragona)
Obrador Edèndum
Orfeo Canongí
Patronat Pro-Batea
Pragma General d'Edicions, S.L.
Silva Editorial
Universitat Rovira i Virgili. Servei de Publicacions

Notes

1. The Japanese publishing market is the exception that proves the rule. From this situation we are able to deduce that the change from paper format to electronic format needs to be accompanied by a global technological change in all spheres. In order to understand the differences between Catalonia and Japan we need only quote the broadening of standard bandwidth in the two countries.
2. The average production run of publications in Catalonia in 2005 was 2,921 copies, according to the *2005 Report on Internal Commerce in Catalonia*.
3. To view a sample of the different reactions of Catalan editors with regard to the changes in the shareholding of Grup 62 read the article entitled "*La edició en catalán se concentra*", published in the *La Vanguardia* newspaper on 27 August 2006.
4. In response to the excess number of new titles, the sector agreed to a reduction. Consequently, the number of titles published in Catalan in 2004 fell by 4.4%, only to be recovered and exceeded the following year, according to the *2005 Report on Internal Commerce in Catalonia*.
5. To understand the current situation with regard to self-publishing, read the article by Hèctor Montalvo entitled *Què faig amb la meua novel·la? L'autor com a editor*.
6. Data taken from the website of the Spanish ISBN Agency during the month of February 2007. For detailed analysis, the figures for 2006 may be the definitive ones. The reason is that there are publishing houses that have still not informed the Agency of the titles of the last few months, and this data will be updated throughout the year.
7. Many entities publish titles without an ISBN number since their books are not directly intended for sale to the public. This is the case, to quote just one example, with some of the books published by Publicacions del Port de Tarragona.
8. The evolution of titles in Catalan published by Silva Editorial is as follows: 3 titles in 2001, 4 in 2002, 5 in 2003, 8 in 2004, 3 in 2005 and 10 in 2006.
9. The evolution of titles in Catalan published by Pragma Edicions is as follows: 13 titles in 2003, 13 in 2004, 10 in 2005 and 7 in 2006.
10. Aeditors began publishing in 2006, and to date has published 4 titles on the market.
11. See the article entitled "*El món editorial, entre la cultura, la indústria, la minorització i el centralisme: el miratge tarragoní*", published in the journal *Kesse*, nº. 24, December 1997.
12. Without doubt, the best-selling author of the publishing house. Seventeen editions of her most famous cookbook have been published with sales of more than 46,000 copies, according to the website of Cossetània Edicions.
13. La Gent del Llamp is a collection of a cultural nature that regularly publishes creative literature titles (with an average output of two a year).
14. In 2005 it published 116 titles and in 2004, 128; according to the online database of the Spanish ISBN Agency.
15. In the annexe we have included a list of the publishers in 1996 and 2006, on which the graphs that appear below are based. The data was taken from the online database of the Spanish ISBN Agency.
16. According to the online database of the Spanish ISBN Agency, in 2006 the Tarragona Provincial Council of Tarragona only published one book, in conjunction with Viena Edicions. There were

no publications in 2005, whereas in 2004 there were eleven, seven of which were exhibition catalogues.

17. See the list of publishers in 1996 and 2006 included in the annexe.
18. In 2006 the URV was in fourth place out of the eleven Catalan universities in terms of the number of articles published by lecturers and researchers in scientific journals, and in 21st place out of the 79 universities that exist in Spain. Source: “*La URV és la 4^a universitat catalana i la 21^a de l'Estat pel que fa al nombre d'articles publicats*”, article published in the *El Punt* newspaper on 24 December 2006.
19. This is a study that was carried out by Jaume Aulet and Pere Martí entitled *La literatura catalana a l'ensenyament secundari. Un procés de degradació, amb propostes per aturar-lo*, which was published in March 2007.
20. According to a study carried out by CEGAL, there are approximately 4,000 bookshops and 40,000 points of sale for books in Spain.