



Publishing & The Pandemic
A Special Report from India and China

with

- **Vikas Gupta, Wiley India**
- **Tracey Pan, Chinese Medical Association Publishing House**
- **Siddharth Singh**

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KENNEALLY: Welcome to Copyright Clearance Center's podcast series. I'm Christopher Kenneally for Beyond the Book.

Estimates vary, but somewhere from a fifth to half of the world's population are confined today to their homes in a global effort to control the spread of the novel coronavirus. Two and a half million people worldwide have already been infected and more than 166,000 have died.

In this special report for CCC's Beyond the Book, I travel virtually to India and China to learn how publishers and researchers in the most populous countries on earth are managing.

From Delhi, Vikas Gupta, managing director of Wiley India, describes the 2020 pandemic as the latest and most serious challenge to his industry, one which Indians have met with resolve.

GUPTA: One thing about Indians is that they really work well when it comes to adversity, and that has been the case even across the country when it comes to the crisis, the way the crisis has been managed by the government and the people across curfews – people are maintaining that, even if it is voluntary. So what was important was the resolve.

See, publishing as an industry is under threat globally. We know that. It's not about Wiley, but across the publishing industry who know we are fighting multiple battles for the last few years, battles around free content, battles around copyrights, battles around re-exports. There are multiple battles they are fighting. So there is a resolve in the people who are in publishing, because they are in publishing not because they had no other options. They work in publishing because that's their passion. That's what they want to do.



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KENNEALLY: From Beijing, Tracey Pan of the Chinese Medical Association Publishing House recalls the urgency to publish COVID19 findings so that researchers in China and abroad might pursue clinical evidence for the treatment of COVID-19.

PAN: The platform continuously updates and summarizes the relevant academic research and the public academic resources which published in the Chinese Medical Association several journals and the other domestic biomedical and health academic journals. And the articles are classified by specialty and the type of literature. Therefore, it helps the readers to quickly link to the relevant content. Until today, 816 articles in 101 academic journals published on the platform, and the total reads has been reached 2.75 million.

KENNEALLY: As the COVID19 pandemic grips the world in a viral vise, authors like Siddharth Singh in Delhi are coming to terms with the ways that their work is being transformed by a destructive disease.

SINGH: I think that this pandemic will also mean at the very personal level, we'll have to change the ways of doing things. I think being an author is already a fairly lonely job. Doing things to keep ourselves mentally healthy even in isolation will become very critical.

In addition to this, now our meetings are mostly online. So I think some form of human interaction is lost in such online meetings. It's harder to gauge the emotions and the perspectives of the person when the meetings are online, and also it creates a level of formality due to which we are unable to prod deeper in ways that we would if we were meeting in person. So I think as a researcher, this definitely has an impact on the way that I'm able to draw out information from the people I'm speaking to.

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KENNEALLY: Vikas Gupta is the managing director of Wiley India and a former president of the Association of Publishers in India. A recognized thought leader in the publishing and knowledge industry for over 20 years, Vikas Gupta has been a leader in technology-driven learning solutions, research and faculty development, professional certifications, and skill development. His books in the field of IT have sold over 2 million copies worldwide. Welcome to the program, Vikas Gupta.

GUPTA: It's a pleasure. It's really an honor to be here. And I look forward to our talk.



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KENNEALLY: There is a national lockdown in India as we speak. I wonder if you could share with us the overview you have of the impact of this coronavirus crisis on the publishing industry there in India.

GUPTA: So if you talk from an Indian perspective, we have multiple challenges. One challenge is because the lockdown was announced with only a couple of days of notice, publishers overnight did not have anything in terms of – what I call is more like a time to get ready for working at home. Having said that, we all work in a connected world, so from a publishing operations perspective, because from the editorial side, sales side, all of those things, things are smooth, and people can work from home, it's doing well.

All of our customers, our supply chain, printers, binders, transportation, even our distributors, Amazon or Flipkart in India, none of them is operating when it comes to books, because the government only allowed essential services and products to be sold in this period. So it means if you are doing medicines and some household stuff, you can sell, but books is not something which you are allowed to sell, so digital is the only way. Either you are on Kindle or you are on certain platforms which sell digital. Those things are still being sold. But anything print is totally at a stop at all levels, from supply chain to production to distribution to end booksellers and distributors and sales of our products.

KENNEALLY: I wonder if you can reflect on just how the Indian publishing industry did manage with such a short notice to really flip from physical workspace to virtual workspaces. Were you surprised at how quickly and perhaps how well that went?

GUPTA: Surprised? Yes. But one thing about Indians is that they really work well when it comes to adversity, and that has been the case even across the country when it comes to the crisis, the way the crisis has been managed by the government and the people across curfews – people are maintaining that, even if it is voluntary. So what was important was the resolve.

See, publishing as an industry is under threat globally. We know that. It's not about Wiley, but across the publishing industry who know we are fighting multiple battles for the last few years, battles around free content, battles around copyrights, battles around re-exports. There are multiple battles they are fighting. So there is a resolve in the people who are in publishing, because they are in publishing not because they had no other options. They work in publishing because that's their passion. That's what they want to do.



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So I was not surprised, but I was more, I'll say, appreciative of the fact that the pace with which they flipped it was really very interesting, because I'm in touch with most of the CEOs of all Indian and foreign publishing organizations in India.

Our only challenge is that from the product development side, we are doing well – all publishers. But now, you are having – books are being ready in terms of digital form. They have to be printed, and they have to be shipped. That is where the troubles are. And we have to still pay our bills.

KENNEALLY: That tremendous resolve of Indian publishers has meant they have responded in innovative ways.

GUPTA: In the education side, what we saw was there was always a challenge towards what you learn in the class from the community is very different from learning online, yes. But the solutions – like Wiley has WileyNXT, and many other publishers have similar solutions – were able to create an experience where the teacher still teaches online, but the immersion of learning it, learn by doing, comes from a platform which are AI-enabled technology platforms which teach from a futuristic perspective.

Let me give you an example. If I show you a video how to do an open-heart surgery 500 times, that doesn't make you a heart surgeon. You need to actually do a heart surgery to do it. But if I can create a simulation of that, and that allows you to wear the gloves of a doctor and start learning and start performing the surgery in a virtual world, that is real learning which simulates the actual-life situation. We have built that kind of solutions, especially in the areas of IT, design thinking. So all the 21st century hard and soft skills is where we have built a lot, and we are getting excellent results around it – really excellent feedback from students who are using it.

KENNEALLY: As you describe the situation, Vikas Gupta, it strikes me that there are laboratories hard at work right now trying to solve the COVID-19 dilemma to give us a vaccine or a treatment. But you're describing a different kind of laboratory – a laboratory for digital learning. You're working in that laboratory every day in that crisis.

GUPTA: Yes, you're absolutely right. It's a very nice way to put it.

We have a project in our data engineering and data science courses on how to build a safe car. It's a data analytics job. What its problem is – that as you have certain sensors in a car, what sensor data you will take to make sure your car is safe – if somebody is drunk, say for example, and their hand starts to wobble. So what does



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the car know, that that person's hand is wobbling, so it should stop the car? Good way. But what happens if the person is an 80-year-old gentleman whose hand wobbles when he drives the car, but he is totally fine, and the car is totally fine? You use such kind of problems where if 100 people even solving the same problem are in the same class, they will get 100 different answers, and all are right, and all are wrong. Time will tell. But the idea is you cannot just have the same answer. That is where people find the immersion of different kind.

KENNEALLY: It also strikes me, Vikas Gupta, that the Indian experience is the global experience. Yet the Indian marketplace is a very particular one. It's an important one in global publishing. I understand that the country is the second-largest market for e-learning outside the US. It is also, I believe, second place as an English-language print book publisher. But tell us a bit about the market – the differences, the distinctions that make India stand out as a different market from other large national markets.

GUPTA: What is most important is Indian publishing is so much competitive that there is such good quality content being created, and the pricing of the books is so low as compared in the world, and still publishers in India survive and make money. That is mind-boggling. That uniqueness of this market and the entrepreneurship that the publishers bring in in the publishing industry in India is very unique. There's no other place in the world like this.

KENNEALLY: We are speaking today in the midst of the crisis, in the thick of the battle against the coronavirus, but I imagine that you have begun to think about a world transformed after the crisis ends. Give us your vision. What are you expecting to see when we emerge from the coronavirus crisis to this world transformed and to a publishing industry transformed – in India and around the world?

GUPTA: So the one very unique thing about physical books was that you have to produce the book – OK, you have Amazon now in many countries and similar platforms. But the book distribution was the biggest challenge. Amazon solved that challenge by – you can publish your book on Amazon, so the thing was, why do you need a publisher? Everybody can self-publish. They're right, but it is also a model which is going on around the world.

If I talk from that perspective, the change I will see is that publishers need to bring much more than their ability to produce a book and market a book, because flat content on its own will not travel for long because of the challenges of things available by piracy, especially digital piracy. Flat content will lose its value. Like in the music industry, songs are made available literally free now. So what do the publishers do?



You will see very soon solutions coming in where the flat print content in digital form will be made free or with a low, low price, but you start charging for those immersive experiences.

I will take it into two buckets. One bucket is educational publishing becoming more digital with immersive learning, where you pay for that immersive learning, not for flat content. But in the trade side or fiction side, I have something very interesting I can share. I feel that it will also become platform-driven, where a book or a story or anything you write, or even a business book where you're teaching people management lessons, could be customized to your requirement. And the book can change its course as you go from chapter to chapter based on your social media profile, what kind of a person you are, what is your age, what do you do. So if you log in through Facebook or Google, you get all of that inside the platform, and the platform starts to work in a way that every time you go in, based on your preferences, the content changes, because the author has written the content based on such test cases. It becomes more like a live book, where every time you read or as more you go in, it becomes very, very interesting.

You will see that you need to create things which are live and continuously upgrading. That's not possible in print, but in digital world, it is possible. So personalization and customization of content based on how you learn, how you want to read, what you want to read is all possible. You will see a real push towards that happening. I'll say we have shaved off a few years – if this would have come, say, five years later, you will see that happening in the next 12 to 18 months, I'm pretty sure.

KENNEALLY: Vikas Gupta, managing director of Wiley India, thank so much for joining me on the program.

GUPTA: Thank you very much. It was really a pleasure.

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KENNEALLY: The Chinese Medical Association Publishing House has 144 journal titles, the largest series of medical journals in China. Among them are 13 English journals with three more new English journals planned for launch in 2020. The CMA journals serve not only as the indispensable source of information for medical and health professionals in China, but also as a window on Chinese medical practice to the world. Tracey Pan is CMA Publishing House marketing director and managing director of the CMA journal Maternal Fetal Medicine. She joins me from Beijing. Welcome to the program, Tracey Pan.



PAN: Thank you for inviting me on the show.

KENNEALLY: Well, thank you, indeed, for taking the time to speak with me today on CCC's podcast, Tracey. We are grateful to the Charlesworth Group in Beijing for connecting us with you. And we want to learn about the various responses that CMA journals have made to the COVID-19 pandemic. I understand one place – a very important place – that this all starts with is an Academic Research Communication Platform. This is a partnership with the Ministry of Science and Technology and other agencies. Tell us about that.

PAN: Yes, thank you, Chris. It's my pleasure. Since late January 2020, the Chinese Medical Association Publishing House have contributed a lot, as you mentioned, when the novel coronavirus was spreading in China. Right on the 30th of January, the very first paper on discoveries of the virus has been published in the English edition of Chinese Medical Journal. And the editorial office only received the paper on 25th. By initializing quick review process and multi-department coordination, the paper was pressed in the news on the 27th of January, and the full content was published online as the first COVID-19 research issued in China.

After the successful attempt of quick review process, on the 1st of February 2020, the Chinese Medical Association's several journals called for paper collection of COVID-19-related articles nationwide. The whole process of peer review and edit is to be done just within six days on average, so it's quite quick. And by another 12 hours, the paper will be published online.

By then, with the support of the four authorities, just as you mentioned, the COVID-19 Academic Research Communication Platform was built to provide timely scientific knowledge for medical practitioners.

The platform continuously updates and summarizes the relevant academic research and the public academic resources which published in the Chinese Medical Association several journals and the other domestic biomedical and health academic journals. And the articles are classified by specialty and the type of literature. Therefore, it helps the readers to quickly link to the relevant content. Until today, 816 articles in 101 academic journals published on the platform, and the total reads has been reached 2.75 million.

After COVID-19 broke out in many places around the world and keeps spreading, the platform stepped up to coordinate with the World Health Organization and some international publishers such as Elsevier, Wolters Kluwer, and today also the



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World Medical Association, by attaching the quick link of the platform on their website or database.

KENNEALLY: In addition to the scientific research that you are publishing at CMA, there is a number of activities that you have organized related to people's responses to the crisis – various essays, poetry, and other kinds of support and messages to families. Tell us about that.

PAN: Yes. During this COVID-19 outbreak, the Chinese Medical Association Publishing House also carried out humanities literature collection activity in the name of United as One Great Love in Epidemic. Within a short time, a total of 285 literature works have been received from all society, including 169 articles, 96 poems, nine video clips, and 11 photo works. The authors – the medical staffs on the front line, the family members, and ordinary people. So the pieces have been released by our own media platform, and this activity is a call to encourage the front-line doctors and nurses and to determine the confidence of winning, to raise the understanding and the trust between doctors and patients, and also to spread science culture.

KENNEALLY: We have been chatting today with Tracey Pan. She is the marketing director for the Chinese Medical Association Publishing House. She joined me from Beijing. And we are grateful to the Charlesworth Group in Beijing for connecting us with you. Tracey Pan, thank you for joining me on the program.

PAN: Thank you. Thank you very much.

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KENNEALLY: Siddharth Singh is an energy and climate policy researcher, and the author of The Great Smog of India. In a Letter from Delhi sent especially to Beyond the Book, Singh takes note of a city, a nation, and a world transfigured by COVID19. Outside his window, the disease is revealing mountains in the distance and much more.

SINGH: The shutdown of the economy due to the pandemic has been critically painful for the masses. It has opened up fractures that we always kind of knew existed, but those that remained buried like a dirty little secret. This includes, of course, hunger, forced migration, and the general fragility of the economy. Nonetheless, the lockdown was probably necessary.

Alongside this disruption, it has also been a very fascinating experiment. It has taught us something about the relationship between the environment and the



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economy. As an example, in only a few days after the lockdown, particulate matter, which generally remains in the territory of 700 or 800 or 900 or even 1,000 during the peak of the smog in the winter, it came down to a level of 7 – just 7. Of course, this came at the cost of a loss of jobs and livelihood for people, so it has taught us something about the nature of policy action. Such drastic measures are obviously unsustainable and very disruptive, and we should use this a learning to make sure that policies on the climate, on environment, are sustainable.

As an author and researcher in this space, I think this pandemic has provided an interesting opportunity to understand the impact of such disruptions on various aspects of energy and environment. Will more and more people, especially in emerging countries like India, want to private transport, like two-wheelers, instead of taking public transport, and therefore have an impact on energy consumption as well as emissions?

I think that this pandemic will also mean at the very personal level, we'll have to change the ways of doing things. I think being an author is already a fairly lonely job. Doing things to keep ourselves mentally healthy even in isolation will become very critical.

In addition to this, now our meetings are mostly online. So I think some form of human interaction is lost in such online meetings. It's harder to gauge the emotions and the perspectives of the person when the meetings are online, and also it creates a level of formality due to which we are unable to prod deeper in ways that we would if we were meeting in person. So I think as a researcher, this definitely has an impact on the way that I'm able to draw out information from the people I'm speaking to.

Also, I think that some of my best ideas that I used to get previously while doing other things – for example, driving a car or using the transit or having drinks with friends at a pub and talking about completely unrelated things – I don't think I can do that anymore, and I think at least in the short run, this will impact the way I'm able to be very creative with communicating my ideas.

This pandemic will substantially change the way we do things, both in terms of the society at large, but also at a personal level. But I think it's very critical for us to use this pandemic to leave behind a better world.

KENNEALLY: For more reporting on Publishing and the Pandemic, visit CCC's Velocity of Content blog at copyright.com and for archived episodes of Beyond the Book go to beyondthebook.com



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Jeremy Brieske of Burst Marketing is our co-producer and recording engineer. For Copyright Clearance Center, I'm Christopher Kenneally.

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