

A NEW CHAPTER IN THE BOOK INDUSTRY

New Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have had a significant impact on the book industry in recent years. All aspects of the industry, from publishing and printing through to distributing and selling, have been affected by the rapid emergence of the Internet, digital media and other new technologies. The industry in Spain has been no exception to this. Businesses in the ‘book capitals’ of Madrid and Barcelona, as well as other parts of the country, have had to operate in this new, ICT-driven environment. Failure to anticipate and adapt to this new environment has posed a real threat for firms, their employees and the book industry as whole. Moreover, it has raised fundamental questions and concerns about the marketplace for Spanish language, education and culture.

The Spanish book industry is not alone. Indeed, their situation echoes the wider European agenda in dealing with the structural, economic, societal and cultural changes brought about by new ICTs. The relaunched Lisbon Strategy and initiatives such as the i2010 European Information Society all emphasise the pivotal role played by new ICTs in the future of the European Union (EU) as a world-leading, knowledge-based economy. An ideal illustration of how this European role has been played out in the Spanish book industry is the New Economy of Access to Information Development Partnership (DP) – known as **EN@E**.

EN@E turned a **new and dynamic chapter** in the Spanish book industry by launching a direct response to the Information Society. In the words of its Director, Jaime Brull, the DP aimed “*to give a definitive proposal to overcome the challenges which the traditional word of books has to face in the 21st Century.*” This proposal was by no means an isolated and uncoordinated initiative. On the contrary, it had the full backing and financial support (as formal partners) of the Spanish Ministry of Culture, Education and Sport, the four federations for book publishing, distribution, printing and selling, as well as the prestigious digital printing firm, Fotomecánica Rafael.



This partnership, under the leadership of EdiTrain (a guidance and support association), built a programme of research, training and support that proved ground-breaking in the Spanish book industry and beyond.

E-LEARNING AND VIRTUAL COACHING TO CLOSE THE ICT GAP

When EN@E was launched in May 2002, it devised the following scenario for itself:

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| One industry | - Spanish book industry |
| One threat | - ICT gap and exclusion of employees |
| One challenge | - To narrow the gap |
| One project | - EN@E |
| One method | - E-learning and virtual coaching |
| One commitment | - To make it happen! |

This scenario held strong throughout the two and a half year lifespan of the DP, giving rise to two substantial pieces of research, an array of innovative training and guidance products, and levels of student participation and feedback well beyond those originally anticipated. Above all, the true indicator of EN@E’s success is the interest and impact it has sustained a year after completion, most notably from the Spanish Ministry of Industry and the audio-visual sector.

The underpinning approach of the DP was extremely widespread as the activities of the partners included not only the conception and delivery of on-line training courses, virtual guidance services and face-to-face coaching, but also the mapping of existing needs of the sector. In respect of the latter, the initial phase of the project involved commissioning a **study** to analyse the configuration of the industry, and determine the profiles of professionals who were able to operate within a new ICT environment; these '**ICT-ready professionals**' of the future would not only be expected to use new tools, methods and software, but would also be required to adapt to new types of work organisation, structures and dynamics.

As far as the training and guidance is concerned, over an intensive period of seven months, 623 professionals completed one or more of the training packages and benefited from the associated platform services. In total, 88 courses were delivered, culminating in 18 640 learning hours. One figure of which EN@E is particularly proud is the **extremely low drop-out rate** of 12%. The overwhelmingly positive feedback of the participants themselves speaks volumes:

“An excellent programme, well organised and planned, flexible, effective and with a reliable e-learning platform... EN@E has clearly helped to fight the technological gap amongst many professionals within the publishing and printing arts industries in Spain.” Felipe Contreras from SM Editores, a publishing company

What these and other testimonies show is the extent of EN@E's achievement. As Jaime Bull summarises, *“the success of EN@E comes from different directions, but mainly from the core of the industry, its workforce, which soon realised the importance of taking part in this project and turned the ICT threat into an opportunity proving itself to be a mature industry ready to face new challenges in the future... The project finishes leaving a heritage of know-how amongst a group of professionals who understand the book sector from a multimedia point of view, looking ahead to a brighter future.”*

INNOVATING FOR A DYNAMIC E-ECONOMY

Without a doubt, a defining feature of EN@E was its **high degree of innovation**. Prior to EN@E, ICT training programmes failed to reflect the full demands a dynamic e-economy. Luis González from the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports sums up the situation:

The current training programmes ... have given priority to several target groups (i.e. women, the over 45s, disabled employees). Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that these training schemes in spite of being focused on ICT programmes, have never considered either the structural changes or the future skills that will be demanded in the short and medium term. Moreover, these training programmes and sector policies have not included guidance actions towards employers and employees. Within this context emerges EN@E, a project which aims to adapt the Spanish book industry to new technologies and new forms of work organisation.”

EN@E broke new ground in designing and offering the first ever training programme associated with new ICTs for book professionals in Spain.

Sixteen **online training packages** were designed in response to the profiles (and training needs) set out in the preliminary study of the sector. Digital Animation, Digital Printing, Book Marketing on the Internet, Web-page Publishing, and Total Quality Management in the Bookshop were just some of the titles available. The high quality and relevance of these packages were guaranteed through the direct input of the partnership, industry experts, as well as an appointed multimedia/web designer. In practical terms, this was achieved by the industry experts devising the draft content and structure for the packages based on their understanding of the sector or issue, and drawing on the outcomes of the initial study. The experts then worked with relevant

individuals from the partnership (for example, the Digital Animation course involved the printing federation amongst others) to adapt, refine and enrich the packages. Fotomecánica Rafael played an important role in this development work by reviewing and validating the end products to ensure that they were suitable for the private sector.

But the training programme was not just limited to technological skills sets, such as the use of digital animation and web publishing. It was far more ambitious by addressing the wider organisational demands of the industry, such as the emergence of new job roles in Internet sales or digital printing done 'to order' rather in bulk, and for instance the closer communication required between printers and publishers because of the new choice over the final medium (traditional, online, or a combination of both). Courses addressing these types of demand included Intelligent Information Management, and Networking and Systems.

As such, EN@E recognised the changing face of the industry – from all angles - and provided a **highly integrated training response**. According to EdiTrain sources, this type of response was not only new for the book industry in Spain, but also across the wider EU. Jaime Bull explains that the *“EN@E commissioned a piece of research which demonstrated that the project's products were innovative across the European Union – they were very much a first for the industry as a whole.”*

Apart from the content, EN@E embarked on new territory by delivering the **training on-line** and combining it with a range of **face-to-face and virtual guidance services**. The first platform meant that individuals could access the training courses online, completing various interactive tasks, answering questions and learning from information sources. Their progress through the course could be tracked by the tutors and other staff; for instance, when they last logged on, how long they spent and what elements of the course they had completed. The guidance platform enabled the individuals to interact with each other in virtual discussion fora, thereby exchanging information and support. They were also able to post questions on the site which would be answered in due course by careers advisors or technical experts.

Through the e-platforms, individuals were directed, supported and motivated through every stage of their course, plus they were helped to think and take action more broadly in relation to their careers. A critical success factor of these platforms was the proactive approach and expertise of the tutors, technicians and other staff involved. For example, if an individual had not logged on for a few days, he or she would be contacted by EN@E staff to see if they were 'okay'. Or if an individual had a question, they could post an enquiry and it was quickly routed through to an appropriate expert. There was also the possibility of face-to-face guidance sessions, of which 60 ended up taking place in Barcelona and Madrid.

The personal interaction achieved through these e-platforms and associated support and guidance services undeniably contributed to the **high participation levels and positive feedback** that EN@E achieved. This not only applies to the individuals, but also the tutors who prior to joining EN@E were somewhat unsure and sceptical of the benefits of online learning.

“The courses were very well designed and organised. We have missed a training programme like EN@E. Initiatives like EN@E are not only welcome and needed, but also essential for this industry.” Juan Miguel Sánchez Gil from Espasa Calpe, a publishing firm.

EN@E proved the value of its new training 'formula' for the Spanish book industry: developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the industry; offering learning, guidance and support; and combining online, virtual and face-to-face modes of delivery.

FRESH IMPETUS TO THE PARTNERSHIP

A strength of EN@E was very much its partnership, both in terms of involving key stakeholders in the book industry, as well as harnessing a strong degree of collaboration between the four

federations, the Ministry and Fotomecánica Rafael. Maybe EN@E cannot lay claim to introducing these partners for the first time as they had had prior dealings with each other in the past. However, where the project was absolutely key was in giving fresh impetus to their cooperation, and strengthening and formalising their working relations. This enabled them to undertake joint activities (for example, in jointly contributing to the training packages and e-learning platform) and have a common voice on book-related issues (for example, in presenting their concerns and views on the future needs of the book industry *in unison* to the Ministry of Industry).

How was this level of partnership-working achieved? EdiTrain identified an issue that was equally compelling for all the partners around which the project activities could be organised. The initial study and mapping exercise was a very practical way of doing this. Through the study EdiTrain was able to clearly identify the challenges and opportunities that were common to all the partners and the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration where this had not existed before. A key conclusion of the study, for instance, was that the incorporation of new technology had caused the traditional barriers between publishers, booksellers, distributors and printers to be broken down. This also gave the industry – not just one single sector – a more important role as a provider and distributor of Spanish content.

Another important feature of the partnership process was the variety and frequency of the communication. EN@E held bi-monthly face-to-face meetings, which ensured that personal contacts and interest were continually maintained. The e-platforms also housed a virtual project management and communication facility, which enabled the partners to store and access key project documents and communicate with each other outside of the meetings. In this way, EN@E struck the right balance between the more structured, face-to-face communication afforded by the meetings, and the more flexible, ad-hoc interaction via the platforms. The involvement of industry experts significantly added value to this communication and interaction. These experts (approximately three from each sector) attended the meetings, inputted to the initial study and acted in an advisory role to EdiTrain and the partners directly in developing the training packages. They provided a substantial and dedicated resource that the partners had not previously accessed (or at least not in such an all-encompassing and intensive way) and therefore helped to keep the momentum of the partnership going.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

A real testimony to the success of EN@E has been its impact a year on. Rather than the project results ending along with the EQUAL funds, they led to concrete mainstreaming opportunities in the shape of further government-backed projects and expressions of interest from other sectors.

Alongside the training activities, EN@E commissioned a piece of research on “The Influence of New Technologies in the Book Sector within the European Union.” The study undertaken by the General Office for Books of the Spanish Ministry of Culture, Education and Sport aimed to analyse the opportunities afforded by ICTs in the book industry and present a series of recommendations for the public and private sectors. These recommendations included the establishment of an inter-Ministerial working group and allocation of resources for the promotion and support of new technologies.

This study, combined with EN@E’s overall achievements and partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Education and Sport, played a major part in finding routes into government. In particular, it served to **open doors to the Ministry of Industry**, a key government department in business-related policy. The Ministry of Industry showed a keen interest in the work of EN@E and as a result offered the book sector the opportunity to apply for funding under their “Plan for the Consolidation and Competitiveness of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises” (PCCSME) initiative. Their application (which is now awaiting final endorsement) builds directly on EN@E, focusing on the development of guidelines for employers in implementing new ICTs. This marks a significant development in terms of influencing policy, particularly in terms of facilitating inter-Ministerial thinking. Through EQUAL, the Ministry of Industry has taken note of the DP and its outcomes and

placed more emphasis and resources on this important policy area. The development and improvement of innovative practice in relation to the e-economy will from now on receive strengthened government support.

Another key development has been the interest shown by other sectors, notably audio-visual. Through the DP's networks, the Federation of Audio-Visual Production Companies learnt about the success of the project and saw its **potential in the audio-visual sector**, another business area that is very much affected by the use of ICTs. This initial expression of interest led to detailed dialogue between the Federation and EdiTrain (on behalf of EN@E) and eventually the submission of a second application for funding under the Ministry of Industry's PCCSME initiative. The application (which is also awaiting final endorsement) was based on transferring and adapting EN@E to support audio-visual professionals. Clearly, this opportunity for sectoral transferral demonstrates EN@E as being an example of innovative practice, not just for the book industry, but also beyond.

Judging by these developments, EN@E turned a new chapter in the Spanish book industry, which looks set to be a long and interesting one!

CONTACT DETAILS

DP: Nueva economía de acceso a la información (EN@E)
ECDB n°: [ES-ES361](#)

Mr Jaime Brull

Director General

EdiTrain

C/ Eloy Gonzalo 27, 4°

28010 Madrid

Spain

Tel: +34 91591 4256

Fax: +34 91594 3053

E-mail: jbrull@delibros.com

Mr Álvaro Ordóñez

Consultant

EdiTrain

C/ Eloy Gonzalo 27, 4°

28010 Madrid

Spain

Tel: +34 91591 4256

Fax: +34 91594 3053

E-mail: aordonez@editrain.com