

MEDIA



***Hon o umidasu chikara***  
**[The Power to Produce Books]**

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The Japanese publishing industry has been in a slump for a long time now, but the situation has become particularly serious over the past few years. Many bookstores have gone out of business, monthly magazines have ceased publication, and several long-established publishing firms have either gone bust or been absorbed into other lines of business. One of the distinctive things about the publishing crisis in Japan is that although sales are spiraling downward, the number of books being published is actually going up. Publishers are putting out more and more titles in an attempt to make up for declining sales. One result is that the lifespan of books has been reduced dramatically. In this context, the rapid obsolescence of books, the decline of liberal arts education, and the changes brought about by the

new online knowledge infrastructure are among the subjects that need to feature in any consideration of the “power that produces books.” This book focuses on academic publishing and examines the deliberation process leading to publication.

The book uses the three key concepts—“publisher as gatekeeper,” “mixed portfolio strategy,” and “group organization identity”—to analyze case studies from four academic publishers of different sizes and characters. Based on painstaking research and questionnaires, the thorough analysis provides a clear account of academic publishers’ decision-making process, although I might have liked to see a closer connection drawn between this and the question of the “power to produce books” within the context of the ongoing publishing crisis. (Yoshimi)