

LUXURY MEMO SPECIAL REPORTS

Luxury book publishing – Luxury Memo special report

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Chaumet has released a variety of box-set books with Assouline. Image credit: Chaumet

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

The rise of digital media has dramatically disrupted the print industry, but for luxury book publishing, it may have just made these items more precious.

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Content is no longer special since everything is available at the click of a mouse or tap of a finger and mass production has become more accessible. But quality print editions of hardback books, coffee table reads and even special-edition magazines are primed more so than ever now to be collectibles.

"If anything, the digital era has increased our culture's value for the physical book, elevating it to art piece or artifact," said Christy Shannon Smirl, owner of [Foxtail Books & Library Services](#), Jackson Hole, WY. "Having the option to read content on a device somehow magnifies the beauty and authenticity of paper and ink.

"Discerning shoppers with means recognize that the height of luxury when it comes to books is not easy access," she said. "If you can get something anywhere, it makes it less special.

"Today's book lover has options like limited-editions by incredible artists, first editions of fine literature and other qualities that make a book valuable and collectible."

Top 5 trends in luxury book publishing

- Photography

Luxury books focused on imagery are common created in luxury publishing for consumers to own as keepsakes.

- Cookbooks

Brands are often crafting high-quality books that share a piece of their history through recipes.

- Informative

While always crafted in luxury, many printed books focus on niche topics that readers can learn from while also holding on to a collectible positioning.

- Children's books

Families are often coming together over special moments through reading, giving children's books multi-generational appeal for the luxury segment.

- Anniversary

Luxury brands are often taking to print to celebrate milestones, birthdays and anniversaries.

Forever in print

Imagery is one of the most important aspects of a high-quality print book. This opens an avenue for luxury brands, whose products are rooted in aesthetically pleasing characteristics.

Brands such as Tiffany & Co., Chaumet, Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Rimowa, South Coast Plaza and a slew of automakers have leveraged print to connect with their most loyal segments.

Quality print books can often immortalize products, advertising history and other content from brands in a beautiful manner that has a collectible feel. Loyal fans often treasure editions such as these.

Coffee table books and collectibles are some of the most common luxury print editions.

For instance, Hearst-owned fashion title *Harper's Bazaar* showcased the visions of its editors, photographers and stylists dating back to 1867 in a recent tome.

"Harper's Bazaar: 150 Years: The Greatest Moments" recounts notable covers, celebrated photographs and 50 written excerpts such as articles, poems and fiction penned by *Harper's Bazaar* writers in 400 pages ([see story](#)).



Harper's Bazaar: 150 Years: The Greatest Moments tells of the publication's artistic evolution

German luggage brand Rimowa recounted its 120 years of history in a new book from publisher Assouline.

Simply titled "Rimowa," the tome details the brand's position at the intersection of fashion and function, as well as focusing on the people behind the LVMH-owned label. Despite a marketing strategy that does not include print advertising, Rimowa sees the value in sharing its story through this anniversary volume ([see story](#)).

Similar to *Harper's Bazaar* and Rimowa, many brands use print as a way to celebrate an anniversary. But sometimes they focus on even just one product.

British automaker Jaguar Land Rover marked its seven-decade milestone in a print endeavor.

As the brand geared up for its 70th anniversary celebration in 2018, a book titled "Icon" delved into the automaker's Series and Defender 4x4 models. While the Defender is no longer a part of the Land Rover line-up, the model holds a significant place in the brand's history as its original vehicle ([see story](#)).



Photograph by Joanna Lumley within "Icon." Image credit: Land Rover

Swiss watchmaker Omega paid tribute to its Omega Seamaster's 70th birthday with a photography book that details the collection's history. "From Seamaster to Seamaster" features more than 200 portraits of Omega's watches, exclusive to the book ([see story](#)).

Luxury through the pages

U.S. jeweler Tiffany took a unique approach by not showcasing its process, products or marketing, but gave fans a chance to bring its iconic window displays home with them in a book.

Released in October 2018, the windows of Tiffany's famous flagship store in New York filled the pages of another book published by Assouline. Priced at \$845 per copy, the editorial product is in and of itself a luxury product ([see story](#)).



Tiffany's book comes in special packaging. Image credit: Assouline

In another unique content choice, a release by Cond Nast Britain's publishing division chronicled the first decade of Atelier Swarovski, specifically its collaborations.

Released in December 2017, "Brilliant – The story of Atelier Swarovski," is a collaboration between Cond Nast Contract Publishing and Swarovski, which sought a partner to produce a coffee table book recounting its inspiration and collaborations.

The book was edited by fashion historian and best-selling author Bronwyn Cosgrave, and also includes contributions from celebrated names in fashion and art, keeping with the collaboration format ([see story](#)).

Ralph Lauren took an in-depth look at its own history with a print edition, too.

The fashion designer teamed up with fashion publication *Women's Wear Daily* for a book looking back at 50 years of his eponymous label's fashion empire.

Titled "Fifty Years of Ralph Lauren," the book includes features and interviews focusing on the massive influence the man has had on U.S. fashion over the last half century. The 192-page book features never-before-seen archival photos from the history of both Ralph Lauren the man and Ralph Lauren the brand ([see story](#)).

WWD teams with Ralph Lauren for its 50 years

But it is not just history that brands leverage for these editions. French fashion house Balenciaga immortalized one of its recent runways by giving fans an inside look at what it took to create its 2018 winter show.

The fashion house showcased its process in a collectible book named "Balenciaga: Winter 18." Published by Rizzoli, it includes 300 behind-the-scenes photographs of sketches, fittings, backstage and on the runway content ([see story](#)).

Spanish luxury brand Loewe branched out into the world of publishing with a specially designed collection of literary classics.

For its autumn/winter 2018 campaign, Loewe published a series of classic novels, from "Dracula" to "Wuthering Heights" in a box set designed by the Loewe creative team. The connection between luxury and literature is a new one for Loewe but was also integrated into the advertising for its collection of apparel and accessories ([see story](#)).

"Our theme is of high-quality books of any genre specifically branded around the author," said Ted Ruybal, publisher of **Wisdom House Books**. "We help authors publish independently and professionally so they keep the rights and earn 100 percent of the royalties.

"No matter the genre of the book, we will produce and print the book with quality embellishments to add value and originality on the author's behalf, and in turn, this sells books," he said. "This is all based on the author's personal publishing goals, which we provide our expertise and guidance."

Travel to print

With luxury brands, it is important for marketers to build a connection to consumers through shared interests. Louis Vuitton, while known for its luggage and handbags, strayed from a focus on its own brand with a new collection, instead looking at the travel sector in general.

The French label launched a series of travel guides created in partnership with artists, who each put their own spin on a specific destination.

Introducing the series, Louis Vuitton created a short film featuring the artist Esad Ribic, who collaborated with the brand on one of the books. Louis Vuitton's video chronicles Mr. Ribic as he travels through Hawaii and illustrates the various sights for the new book ([see story](#)).

Louis Vuitton's Travel Book collection

The beautiful imagery often associated with travel allows for fitting content in print collectibles, focusing on photography.

This opens up opportunity for travel and hospitality brands to dive into the publishing sector as well.

Beyond aesthetically pleasing landscapes, hotel brands also look into local culture as well as their own quality offerings.

Small Luxury Hotels of the World capitalized on the popularity of food tourism with a cookbook featuring recipes from its global culinary team.

Culinary trends such as hyperlocal food, fusion meals and Asian hotpot are represented in the volume. With a focus on main courses, this cookbook is the third volume in a series that the hotel group began in 2015, which allows travelers to bring a piece of the SLH experience home with them ([see story](#)).

London hotel Claridge's similarly brought guests into its kitchens with its debut cookbook.

Published by Hachette Book Group, "Claridge's: The Cookbook" celebrates the 164-year history of the famed London hotel on Mayfair's Brook Street. Hoteliers and retailers often develop cookbooks to continue the in-house experience for guests who have had memorable visits, with culinary delights often being a hook to reconnect and plan a return ([see story](#)).



Claridge's: The Cookbook appears with branded foods and tableware. Image credit: Claridge's

Food and cooking content is a way that many individuals as well as brands highlight their culture.

Travel brands are not the only ones to reach audiences through print cookbooks, but others may also use it to become closer to consumers through heritage.

For instance, the family behind Italian fashion label Missoni invited consumers into its kitchen with a branded cookbook.

Francesco Maccapani Missoni penned "The Missoni Family Cookbook," writing down some of the fashion clan's recipes and traditions ([see story](#)).



The Missoni family is serving up recipes. Image credit: Missoni

Just as cookbooks are not just for travel brands, hospitality brands do not always need to focus on photography and cookbooks.

Hospitality chain Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts translated its on-property experience to art through a publishing partnership with Ignasi Monreal.

Published by Assouline, "Four Seasons: The Art of Hospitality" features digital paintings that depict the brand's service and people. While Four Seasons has been working to tell its stories through digital, sharing these experiences through print allows for tactile and more long-form storytelling ([see story](#)).

Louis Vuitton also leveraged illustration to showcase its products through special moments in another print edition.

"Traveller's Tales: Bags Unpacked" will feature the stories of 50 famous travelers, including author Ernest Hemingway, artist Henri Matisse and fashion icon Karl Lagerfeld. Set to be published in April 2019, the book was written by French journalist Bertil Scali with portraits by Pierre Le-Tan.

Each essay is accompanied with illustrations and shares intimate details about the travelers and their iconic Louis Vuitton luggage. For instance, it is revealed that actress Greta Garbo had a custom trunk to store her 70 pairs of Ferragamo shoes ([see story](#)).



Luggage illustration from Louis Vuitton's upcoming release. Image credit: Louis Vuitton

"There is an enduring appetite for our quality of books in all the categories we publish: fashion, in art, in design, in interiors, in photography, in travel," said Charles Miers, publisher of [Rizzoli](#).

"I think people value the well-made and the permanence and gravitas and commitment of books in this transitory information age," he said. "Our resilience has not fostered evolution, though we will need to evolve. "

Heritage on pages

Luxury marketers often highlight their heritage, as a long history and strong relationship to their founding culture are part of what makes their brands so special.

As with the previously mentioned cookbooks, print in a variety of subjects is a prime avenue for these brands to celebrate their culture and connect to their consumer bases.

British automaker Bentley Motors brought its extraordinary spirit to the printed page, focusing on its Britishness.

Published by Assouline, "Be Extraordinary: The Spirit of Bentley" was penned by Parisian photographer Aline Coquelle and tells the history of the 100-year-old automaker. Considered "the most-definitive British luxury car company," Bentley was founded in 1919 by Walter Owen Bentley in Cricklewood, North London ([see story](#)).

LVMH-owned jeweler Chaumet delved into its history of parties, photography and art through a trio of books.

Published by Assouline, the slipcase set of three volumes is penned by three different authors, who explore the more than 200-year-old house through a particular lens. Despite consumers' growing consumption of digital content and brands' increased attention toward producing it, print still holds a valuable place in celebrating brand heritage ([see story](#)).



Chaumet has released a second box-set of books. Image credit: Chaumet

Another initiative from the French jeweler put more of its history into print with another boxed set of books.

Chaumet's trio of tomes covers topics including the women who have worn its jewelry over the years and the house's relationship with royalty. Published by Assouline, the set allows the brand to delve into specific aspects of its heritage in a more long-form fashion ([see story](#)).

Flipping the narrative, British luxury alliance Walpole put on an initiative that has culture highlighting brands.

The alliance continually produces annual editions of a yearbook, and celebrated 25 years since its founding in 2017 with a 15th-edition of the printed softcover book.

Walpole's mission is to promote, protect and develop the qualities of United Kingdom-based luxury houses by lending its support to tradition, heritage and craftsmanship. The United Kingdom's luxury businesses, from apparel and jewelry to hospitality and automotive, contribute more than 32 billion, or \$34 billion at current exchange, to the country's economy as well as being a lucrative source of employment ([see story](#)).



Walpole's 25th anniversary promotional banner

"There is a wide range of quality when it comes to the book arts," Foxtail's Ms. Shannon Smirl said. "Luxury publishers are masters of technical production and craftsmanship, employing historical book binding tools but also new technologies.

"You can really feel the difference the first time you open one of these books: the weight of the paper, the stitches (instead of glue) in the binding, the texture of the cover materials, whether leather, fabric or paper," she said. "Book designers are getting more and more creative with the presentation of the book as an art object, packaging in designer cases, pairing a book with a signed print by the artist or subject, or including a custom book stand.

"The masters of this industry are doing their best to stand out among their peers, so no expense in terms of expertise, time, or by-hand craftsmanship is spared to create an incredible product."

Children's stories

Brands leverage print because it creates a special bond and moment with consumers, and many have learned to take this to another level by tapping into special moments of consumers' lives.

Family is an important aspect of many consumers' lives, making bonds throughout childhood vital for any parent. A few luxury brands have taken to children's books to insert themselves in these special family experiences.

In yet another print creative, Chaumet captured the love between a mother and daughter in a book release that acts as a collectible.

The jeweler created a special carousel book for readers of all ages, depicting various cycles of life between a mother and daughter. The pop-up book was designed to be a piece of decor and features six different scenes ([see story](#)).



Chaumet publishes new book. Image credit: Chaumet

As part of luxury hotel Royal Mansour's new packages push to cater to families, the hotel has published two new books, a children's book named "Lila is Looking for Mansour" and a collection of essays for the hotel, "Stories of Marrakech" only available to guests in 300 copies ([see story](#)).

"Genres that we currently see and are publishing are children's books with original artwork from well-known children's illustrators or creative coffee table books showcasing a theme and medium art, photography," Wisdom House's Mr. Ruybal said. "An honorable mention would be inspirational or educational books written by CEOs as a glorified business card to promote a business or strengthen a cause.

"Overall, trending themes always point towards art, fashion, collectibles and quality of production," he said.

Looking to digital

While not typically what most think of when referring to books, the look book in the fashion world is an important part of the industry, allowing brands to showcase their collections in a more mobile way before the age of the Internet.

Now that digital is around, the fashion world is greatly disrupted, with look books becoming another tool that has been rethought.

Department store chain Neiman Marcus's fall shoe and handbag campaign costars the latest fashions and a group of furry friends.

For its seasonal look book, the retailer teamed up with photographer Elias Weiss Friedman, whose Instagram handle @TheDogist celebrates man's best friend. This lighthearted approach to catalog imagery incorporates high fashion into Mr. Friedman's style of canine shots ([see story](#)).



Neiman Marcus look book photo featuring Dior. Image courtesy of Neiman Marcus

The department store chain also boosted its online engagement by revamping its approach to look books, going from a standard grid layout to intuitive, shoppable pages.

As part of its merchandising strategy, Neiman Marcus publishes more than 150 look books annually to show off the designer collections it carries both in-store and online. Although its look books included rich imagery illustrating its merchandise, Neiman Marcus was limited in terms of shopping functionality ([see story](#)).

Department store chain Barneys New York gave a student photographer real-world fashion shoot experience through

a new competition.

Rufus Barkley, a senior at the School of Visual Arts, won the Barneys New York Foundation's first Perfect Shot competition, earning him the chance to shoot a digital look book for Barneys' Web site. Education is one of the pillars of Barneys' eponymous charitable foundation, as the retailer looks to be a force in nurturing the fashion industry's next generation of talents ([see story](#)).



Rufus Barkley chose his grandmother as one of the subjects of his California shoot. Image credit: Barneys New York

The bridge between digital and print is accessed in many ways, not just with look books.

French footwear and accessories label Roger Vivier took a different approach and instead of bringing print to digital, it took digital to print. The brand tapped into the opinions of digital social influencers with a book release.

"#LoveVivier" tells the brand's story through the perspective of 17 online personalities. This tome is a mixture of analog and digital, bringing the opinions of Internet entrepreneurs to the page ([see story](#)).



#LoveVivier track Parisian style through influencers. Image credit: Roger Vivier

"Digital formats have not progressed much at all to compete with a tangible book," Mr. Ruybal said. "The formats and reader options are the same from 10 years ago.

"Readers obviously have a longer attention span and are not swayed by speed' or ease,'" he said. "Readers are, in a way, collectors as they feel rewarded with every book they read. Its placement on the shelf is the trophy on display, something that an ebook file cannot live up to.

"Digital books are good as a promotional tool saving in cost of physical delivery versus an email attachment for reviews or endorsement."

Print survives

Luxury printing is one of the few industries that have remained in tact despite the digital revolution.

The high-quality materials, such as cloth, rubber, leather and more, allow for a special product that owners proudly show, whether it be a coffee table book or a deep-dive into history. The prices of these irreplaceable items can range into the tens of thousands, much like their luxury product cohorts.

Many luxury books are not even associated with a specific brand.

For example, a waterproof edition of "South Pole: The British Antarctic Expedition", by Assouline is retailed for

\$4,500. Meanwhile, other first-edition collectibles could be invaluable.

Many publishers, including Assouline, allow for further luxury characteristics, by customizing covers.

"Luxury books tend to portray the topics that interest a crowd with a high standard for quality, culture and craftsmanship," Foxtail's Ms. Shannon Smirl said. "Beautifully done, oversize books on fine art, architecture and photography are often popular with our custom library clients."

"We've also been seeing more collaboration between publishers and luxury brands on the market this year, covering subjects like haute couture, jewelry and luxury car design."

Best practices for luxury book publishing

- Charles Miers, publisher of Rizzoli:
 - "A love of books and bookmaking first and foremost [goes into luxury bookmaking]."
 - "A respect for what a book is and the creativity and commitment of authors, photographers, graphic designers and publisher that it takes."
- Ted Ruybal, publisher at Wisdom House Books
 - "It is an investment of time and money. Publishing is an ego-driven industry, so for us, quality in design and production matter in branding the author and building the reputation of the publisher."
- Christy Shannon Smirl, Foxtail Books & Library Services
 - "When I curate a collection for a client, I try to identify subject matter that corresponds to their interests and, certainly, the brands they might identify with most strongly. Books on labels like Chanel and Dior, classic and timeless, never disappoint. Recently books on brands like Louis Vuitton, Rolex and Veve Clicquot have been popular in our projects."

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