# DON BOSCO THE OUTSTANDING WRITER

Don Bosco was among the first to foresee how both education and the press excellent things in themselves – would inevitably become the most powerful means with which the devil would spread evil and error among people. “We must forestall this peril as much as possible. We must encounter a secularistic education and press with one based on religion,” DB repeatedly said. Thus it happened that he decided to dedicate himself to the education of the young and the adults through good books. To this end he became a writer.

Respected fathers and brothers, today I would like to speak about ‘DB the outstanding writer’. When we take a good look at DB’s life, we become aware of many initiatives he put in place to educate and evangelize the young. One can imagine DB’s daily existence filled with looking after his boys, opening houses as schools, travelling around looking for financial resources, founding a religious congregation speaking, preaching and hearing the confessions of his boys, writing letters, make official visits, journeys---but amidst the many things he had to do, DB developed an intense activity as a writer and publisher, a real communications impresario, we might say today.

His publishing program was marked by the major principles and concerns that drove his activities in life generally. At time of attack on the church and the papacy, criticism of religion, he set out to become a catholic publisher as apologist who could defend the church and the catholic faith with his books. No wonder then that in this aspect to, he was like St. Francis de sales.

## EDUCATIONAL BOOKS

Besides his role as an apologist, DB wrote and published books with an education purpose. The first book which DB wrote was ‘*Historical Aspects of the life of the cleric Luigi Comolo*(1844), and he had 30000 copies of this printed. *Church history* (1845) and *Sacred* *history* (1887) were also amongst the early works published by the st. as a response to the needs of his youngsters who, once they had studied the catechism, had no other suitable books as a follow up.

Books like *The Companion of Youth*, aimed at religious practice of youth parishes and religious centres; or ‘*the Metric, Decimal system* (1849), published as a simple explanation of how to make use of this new approach which came in to law in 1945. *History of Italy*, *Sacred History*, the lives of the popes, including a *Library of Italian Youth*, are a number of other example of DB’s interests in reaching out to young people through books.

## POLITICAL PRESS

But the other than his interest in education , we can also find in DB’s publishing activity a more modern mindset, one concerned with finding the most effective communication tools for creating opinion and influencing public opinion. Turin was very much alive in political terms during the second half of the 19th century and many kinds of newspapers and journals came into being all competing in a much broader market and on the lookout for a popular readership.

## A Magazine for the Salesian Family

Another product DB set in motion, in 1877, was the *salesian Bulletin*. Initially he was thinking of benefactors and salesian cooperators, and it was part of DB’s communication policy for creating something to keep him in touch with all of the cooperators by now spread around the world. This a magazine which continues to be published today across the salesian world, fulfilling the aims for which it was created by DB, to be an instrument for bringing people together, crating awareness of the life of the congregation and fostering knowledge about the salesian spirit in order to help the young.

## The Catholic Reading

At the beginning of 1853 an important collection in DB’s publishing effort began, the catholic reading, which he addressed to well define audience: worker, farmers, and young people from the popular classes whether in the city or in the countryside. The catholic readings were full of testimonies, stories, and examples of young people who behaved correctly. The lives of his pupils, Domnic Savio, Michael Magone, follow this style.

To resolve the distribution problem, DB used structures available through the church; he also had people helping him who were in charge of subscriptions. The Catholic readings were the core and most important effort in DB’s publishing activity.

Now as the sons of DB, our father and founder invites us to emulate his footsteps as an effective writer and communicator. For this task we need to read more and more books; steal the little free time that remains after the daily busy schedule just like DB did.