



BEYOND THE BOOK 2: “THE VOYAGE TO FIND AN AUDIENCE AND REACH A MARKET”

WASHINGTON, DC, November 7—A writer’s work is never done. That was the message from a panel of distinguished writers and editors who spoke at “*Beyond the Book*,” a conference on the business of writing, sponsored by Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) and held within the storied walls of the National Press Club.

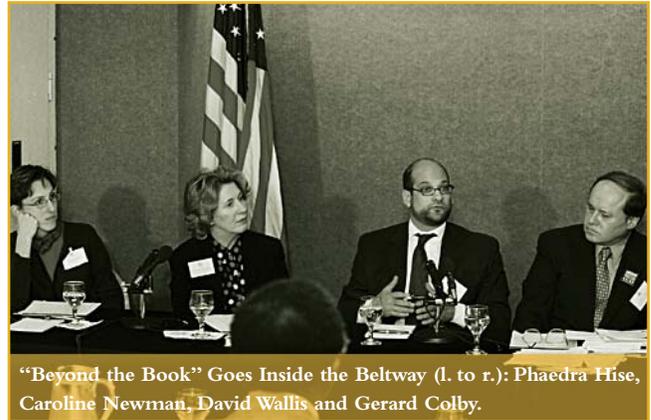
Before a full house of writers, who included members of the **National Writers Union (NWU)**, **Authors Guild**, **Text and Academic Authors Association (TAA)**, and **Children’s Book Guild**, “*Beyond the Book*” panelists confirmed what many freelancers and authors know from hard-won experience—to succeed, writers have to devote as much energy to protecting, promoting, and profiting from their work as they put in to producing it.

DEFINING “PROFITABILITY”

“*Beyond the Book is where writers and creative people go after we put down the pen or turn off the PC,*” noted **Christopher Kenneally**, the conference moderator and CCC’s Director of Author & Creator Relations. An author and freelance journalist himself, Kenneally described this next step in the writing process as “*the voyage to find an audience and reach a market.*”

For author, freelance journalist, and pilot **Phaedra Hise**, the principle that guides her writing career is the same one she applies when flying her plane. “*You have to be in the moment and thinking long term,*” she explained. Formerly technology editor for *Inc. Magazine*, Hise noted that it’s often easier for many writers to focus solely on the immediate demands of pitches and deadlines and neglect their bottom lines. She advised, instead, to keep a balanced perspective.

“*Profitability isn’t only about the actual price you are being paid,*” Hise said. For example, a writer may choose to contribute to a high-profile publication where the visibility is better than the pay.



“Beyond the Book” Goes Inside the Beltway (l. to r.): Phaedra Hise, Caroline Newman, David Wallis and Gerard Colby.

But panelist **David Wallis** – a seasoned journalist whose work has appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Best American Travel Writing*, among other publications—cautioned that writers must think very carefully about such trade-offs.

“*Patronize those publications that treat you well, and don’t be afraid to walk away from ones that treat you poorly,*” Wallis advised. In particular, he stressed that freelancers should, “*Read your contracts,*” and understand the importance of rights.

WRITE LOCALLY, SELL GLOBALLY

Wallis discovered the potential value of his own work, he told the audience, when he obtained an exclusive prison interview with deposed Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega and later sold versions of the story to more than twenty markets, in both the U.S. and abroad. Inspired by this successful experience, Wallis founded Featurewell.com, an online syndicate now marketing work by over 800 top journalists.

“*Think about international markets,*” Wallis told the audience, noting that health, technology, and celebrities were all subjects that sold well around the globe.

A guaranteed formula for successful book proposals is, of course, the holy grail of writing. If a writer can identify a ready audience for a book, said **Caroline Newman**, executive editor of Smithsonian Institution Press, it boosts the work's chances for acceptance.

"We want to know there is a pre-qualified audience willing to part with twenty dollars to buy this book," she explained. Newman said that she has increasingly seen proposals in which the authors also outline specific publicity strategies and co-marketing opportunities.

On that point, panelist **Gerard Colby** sounded a cautionary note. *"If you want books to succeed, there has to be a commitment behind the book by the publishing house, not just the author,"* he said, pointing out that writers should expect their publishers to support and promote their books. An investigative journalist, author, and current co-chair of the NWU's National Book Division, Colby drew his observations, in part, from preliminary results of an NWU survey exploring authors' working relationships with their publishers.

At Smithsonian, Newman noted, editors make a dedicated effort to build relationships with authors, pointing out that the value of a book contract is not measured only by the advance. *"We're pitching ourselves to you,"* said Newman.

So what principle should guide writers in deciding on a contract, negotiating a word rate, sinking their own resources into a promotion trip? Ultimately, it's a matter of applying hard-headed business principles to a creative-minded pursuit: Whatever will make your words sell profitably.

"It's hard for journalists and authors to think about words as products, but you have to," concluded David Wallis.

Author's note:

Caroline Kettlewell is a freelance writer and regular contributor of travel, adventure, and other feature stories to The Washington Post, and is the author of "Skin Game" (St. Martin's Press), a 1999 BarnesandNoble.com "Editor's Choice" selection. In addition, she has written reviews, essays, profiles, and consumer pieces for a number of regional, online, and specialty publications.

