



Beyond the Book Chicago

Chicago Writers Urged to Take Global View

Writers Should Think Like Publishers & Readers

CHICAGO – As a profession, book writing uncannily resembles the premise of the movie comedy “Groundhog Day” – or at least, when **Neil Steinberg**, Chicago Sun-Times columnist and book author, described it in his characteristically witty fashion.

“You have to realize that if you write a book that sells 1,600 copies, you’re next job is to write another book,” Steinberg told an audience attending Beyond the Book at Chicago’s DePaul University. “And if you write a book that sells 16 million copies, you’re next job is – to write another book.”

Thus, writing is best viewed as commitment to an ongoing process, rather than contentment with final product. Moreover, added Steinberg, be careful if you wish to become an author – you may just succeed, though enjoying any “success” could prove daunting.

“I used to think, ‘Oh, if only I could write a book, I’ll be happy, this will be it.’ Then you do that,” Steinberg said, “and you realize, ‘Oh, no, I meant a *successful* book. I want to amend that.’ And then you just have to go on to write the next book.”

Beyond the Campus, Too

Produced by Copyright Clearance Center’s office of Author & Creator Relations, Beyond the Book regularly gathers a diverse panel of authors and publishing insiders to provide insights and advice for survival in an editorial marketplace overwhelmed with “content” and by information overload.

At DePaul, **Laura Hartman** fittingly urged her colleagues in academia to look beyond their campus walls in order to find an audience for their work.

“I don’t want to write so that only four people read it, but, unfortunately I think that a lot of academic writing is like that. Mostly, we write and a few colleagues in the field build on that, and we move forward,” explained Hartman, who at DePaul University serves as an Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs and a Professor of Business Ethics.

“What I really want to do is to write so that business people make different decisions,” she insisted. “If I have done enough research and I have enough data to make that argument, I want to get it out there.”

A note frequently sounded during the discussion with panelists was that writers should think not only like writers, but also think like readers and publishers, on whom they must depend for their livelihoods.

For the audience of authors, freelance journalists, students and academics *Beyond the Book* host and moderator **Christopher Kenneally**, Copyright Clearance Center’s Director of Author & Creator Relations, recalled the advice of political consultant James Carville, who said that running a campaign was like being a good dog trainer, “You have to think like the dog.”

Authors As Publishers

“What does that mean to writers?” inquired Kenneally, who is a book author and former freelance journalist. “In academia, it means a commitment to research. In freelance journalism and magazine writing, it means understanding what sells. After all, what does it matter if you can’t sell it?”

“Finally, in a publishing world that is undergoing seismic change, with shifting areas of technology and access,” he said, “it may even mean that the business of writing requires some writers to become publishers themselves.”

In the latter case, so-called “print-on-demand” technology now allows authors to have their manuscripts professionally typeset and printed in a high-quality, low-cost fashion. “Independent” publishers, such as iUniverse, which published “Confusing Love With Obsession” by Chicago native **John D. Moore**, routinely make these books available to online booksellers and even traditional bookstores. His book has already sold several thousand copies, Moore told the *Beyond the Book* audience, but his greatest satisfaction lies in the complete ownership of his work.

“What I really wanted was control over what was in the book. That was extremely important to me,” explained Moore, who by profession is an addiction counselor. “Since the success of my book, I have had publishers come to me and say, ‘Hey, we’d really like to buy your book, and we’d like to publish it,’ but I have said, ‘No,’ up to this point. I still want to be able to get my message across and speak to the hearts and minds of readers in a way that I don’t know that a publishing house would let me do.”

A Room With A View

“*Beyond the Book* gave me a lot of ideas for what to do with my writing,” commented Charles Chandler, an editorial project manager for a leading Chicago-based professional association. “I think the advice to think about your writing from the perspective of the audience and the publishers bears repeating to writers, who are often temperamentally averse to marketing their work.”

Call it, then, the writing paradox: The requirement for a room of one’s own, but one with a view of the wide world. “Writing, as in all art, is an engagement with an audience, always,” insisted **Barry Silesky**, a highly-regarded poet, as well as author of several literary biographies, who teaches writing at the Art Institute of Chicago.

“As writers, we’re often not aware of the audience that we’re dealing with, but we only help what we’re doing by having that kind of awareness.” Silesky said. “What you choose to write, how you choose to write it, has to do with your relationship with your audience. And those choices are dynamic – it’s a world that’s continually changing.”