

## BEYOND THE BOOK – NOVEMBER 7

Now from the National Press Club in Washington, DC, the panel on the business of book publishing. You'll hear from National Writers Union representative Gerald Colby, author Phaedra Hise, syndication expert David Wallis, and Smithsonian Institution Press Editor, Caroline Newman. Christopher Kenneally of the Copyright Clearance Center moderates this hour and 45 minute talk.

KENNEALLY: Again, thanks for your patience and I want to welcome everyone this afternoon to *Beyond the Book*. On behalf of Copyright Clearance Center, my name is Christopher Kenneally, and I'm the director of Author Relations for CCC. I want you to know that I very much appreciate your joining us today. Among you are members of the National Writers Union, the Authors Guild, the Childrens Book Guild, and the Association of American Publishers. Thank you all for coming. I also want to thank Book TV for coming as well.

Beyond the Book – what does that mean, really? It has an echo of what the British call 'the back of beyond' and what we Americans typically say is the 'middle of nowhere.' In fact, Beyond the Book is a very real and very important place for everyone in the media business today. Authors and artists and publishers are all going to wind up there at some point. Beyond the Book takes us far indeed, and could be almost anywhere, from book stores to television studios, live and in-person, or downloadable online. Beyond the Book is where writers and creative people go after we put down the pen or switch off the PC. It's not the territory where ideas are composed and words are written. Instead, it's the country where we go to get down to business. The voyage we take, then, is not to find our voice, but to find an audience and reach a market.

This afternoon, and I hope long after we leave this room, all of us here, authors, publishers, agents, and their colleagues, will constitute a kind of core of discovery, not very different from the expedition of Lewis and Clark, whose bicentennial this country is preparing to mark. We are making our way into uncharted land and we may even be looking for something that isn't there. Yet we make the journey, all the same, because we can't stay home.

Unlike with Lewis and Clark, though, the territory Beyond the Book is a busy and very populated place. A recent survey by the Jenkins Group, of 1000 Americans, found that four out of five feel they should write a book. The surveys also estimated that 6 million Americans have already gotten around to writing their manuscripts. Last year, based on ISBN numbers assigned, 80,000 of those manuscripts made it into print. Writing on *The New York Times* Op-Ed page a short while ago, Joseph Epstein, the author of 14 books, suggested that author wannabes should find something else to do. "Save the typing, save the trees," Epstein urged. "It's a lot better to have written the book than actually to be writing one. To be in the middle of composing a book is almost always to feel oneself in a state of confusion, doubt, and mental imprisonment, with an accompanying intense wish that one worked, instead, at bricklaying."

Hopefully, though, you feel a bit better about your work than Epstein admits to himself, or maybe you're one of the lucky ones who have just turned in a manuscript. Either way, you are ready to go Beyond the Book. So let's go exploring today with the help of some fascinating people who've already been there and who can tell us what it looks like.

I'm going to start our panel discussion today with Phaedra Hise. Phaedra Hise writes frequently about business and technology and was the technology editor for *Inc.* Magazine during the Internet boom. Her books include *301 Great Ideas for Managing Technology* and *Growing Your Business Online*. She was co-author with Rob Ryan, of *Entrepreneur America*, and her most recent book, and a fascinating one it is, is called *Pilot Error: The Anatomy of an Airplane Crash*. Her articles have also appeared in many national publications, including *Forbes*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Glamour*, and *Smithsonian Air and Space*.

Phaedra, I want to try to tee up for you some questions about the world you saw right after school, not as a journalist or a freelancer, but working in a bookstore. You sort of saw something that was like Bismarck's remark about law and sausages – we shouldn't see either one being made. And you saw books not being made, but books being sold. What did it teach you, and how has it affected you, as a writer.

HISE: I did have a job at a – is that better? Right here, how's that? I had a job right after I got out of school. I ended up as an assistant manager of one of the biggest Waldenbooks in the country, it was in Boston. And it was absolutely terrifying because we got so many books that came in every day that nobody paid any attention to them, flung them on the shelves, completely ignored them. All of the promotion that was done came from the home office, from people who had cut deals with the publishing companies. I saw all that and I decided that I wanted to work with local authors, and do a local autographing series, so I lined up a lot of people in Boston. We had some good people to choose from, and so I set up some events. That was another eye-opening experience because my guideline became the six book mark. If we sold six books, it was rip-roaring success. It's sad to say that we had many events where we sold two or three books. And that was invaluable because when I started writing books, I knew all that. And I know so many people, even today, who've published several books who have no clue that that's the way that it works on a bookstore level. It made me a real advocate for my books, even with the big publishers that I've gone with because I know that's the way it works.

KENNEALLY: So what does a writer do, then, to prepare oneself for that? How can you ensure that you'll sell more than six books? Is there an approach? Is there a patter? I know, for example, in my own case when I had a book out called *The Massachusetts Legacy*, I had the table set up right by the front of the bookstore and people would walk right by me and I would say, 'Hello, how are you?' and they would say, 'Fine, how are you?' and I would say, 'I'm fine, I'm signing copies of my book.' And really engage them right away.

HISE: Yeah, you turn – and I saw that when I was in Boston. I felt so sorry for the people who were coming in to do the signings. But I would sit next to them and sort of hold their

hand, figuratively, and keep them company because the same thing would happen. People would come in, look at the author, and then just run. They were terrified. So I did learn from that experience that it's about sales, and it's something that writers don't like to think about. But the person who can really move books is the person who's written the books, and that's the person who the book buyer wants to speak to about the experience of writing the book, or about what the book is about. And I hate to be crass, if you want to move books, you've got to move them. Otherwise, there's not much point in doing the autographing, I don't think.

KENNEALLY: Let's take that a bit further. You said to me before that to go on television is really an opportunity to sell your book, and you have to be ready to see that as a selling opportunity. There is an expert, but really, you've got to market yourself. Talk some more about that.

HISE: Well, I think probably like almost everyone else except news anchors, I absolutely hate being on television. It's terrifying. There's so many rules about being on television, especially when you do that weird thing where you're on a news feed and you're in the little room in the isolation booth and you're talking to a little thing in your ear that's interviewing you. But television is like nothing else. You get a humongous audience on television, but it only helps you if you've got that sales mentality in your head.

The biggest mistake I made the first time I went on television was to actually answer the questions that I was asked. Silly me! Didn't realize that you're supposed to put your five bulleted points in your head and hit your points home because they don't care what you say. All they care about is that you look good and you say something interesting. So it might as well be something interesting about your book. Something that'll sell books.

KENNEALLY: What about other medium: When you are, as a journalist, being interviewed by other journalists? Does that give you a special insight into the process and do you know how to respond better, do you think?

HISE: Well, for magazine pieces, yes, because I've been in magazine and newspaper journalism for, oh gosh, 20 years I guess. And I know how a story is put together and I know what they're looking for. And because they know I'm a journalist, they usually tell me the scope of the piece, so it definitely helps with preparing quotes and things like that.

KENNEALLY: But I think it's true as well that every opportunity is not a selling opportunity. Many are, but not all. You write from time to time for Salon.com and there really isn't a very high fee or anything like that, but it's a way to get your name out and then more assignments come from that. Is that how it works?

HISE: Right. When I worked at *Inc.* Magazine for a long time, and it was a magazine about small business, and so I learned – I actually took an accounting class at Harvard which was, like, way over my head, but I did learn about profitability and it isn't always about the best price that you're paid for the piece that you're writing. It's about what you get back. Sometimes that's money, sometimes it's visibility that leads to more work and

leads to better jobs. The book that just came out, *Pilot Error*, that I wrote last year came because I did a series of articles for Salon about the John F. Kennedy, Jr. plane crash. The pay was terrible, but the visibility is unparalleled. It's like going on television. You just can't match that visibility and so something more always comes from that.

KENNEALLY: Being in business is clearly important to you. You told me about some practices that you have, around operating your own business. Tell us about those.

HISE: It's another thing I learned from *Inc.* The first thing I did, when I quit *Inc.* to freelance full time was I set it up as a business by opening up a separate checking account. And everything that I earned from freelancing went into that account. This was mostly for tax purposes, but it ended up being really good, operationally, for the business because all of my expenses are paid out of that account and I pay myself a set salary. And I gave myself a raise after the first year because I was doing really well. I have cut back my salary from time to time, not because I'm a bad worker or anything, but times get hard, especially this past year.

But it makes it much easier to see where you are, as a business, because when you're self-employed, it is a business, and so you can look at your checkbook balance, and say, hey, man, I'm set for three months. I can work on a book proposal right now. Or you look at it and you say, in two months I'm going to get out of money. I'd better go out and beat the pavement and look for jobs. And that was a good thing to do.

KENNEALLY: And it helps you evaluate the assignment of the potential author.

HISE: Right. I say, can I afford to take this job, because it's going to be two weeks worth of work and it pays X. It may be a good investment, like writing a piece for Salon is, but unless I can afford to take it at that point in time, I can't do it.

KENNEALLY: In your work as a book author, you've worked with large houses, with Holt, and also for the new book, a small house, relatively small house. Tell us about those experiences from the perspective of an author and, in fact, why did you choose, in the case of the new book, to go with the small house?

HISE: Well, that was my agent's doing. She convinced me. We got an offer from a small publisher called Brasseys for *Pilot Error*, and I had never heard of Brasseys and so I said, now tell me why I'm supposed to go with this house after I've been with Henry Holt and Harper Collins? And she said, it's better to be a big fish in a small pond. I had no idea what she was talking about until I went through the publishing process – I'm sure you know about this – I had things I never had with the big publishers. I had a publicist. Never had a publicist before. I had cover approval. I never even knew it was possible to get that. They showed me the covers, they showed me the ad copy. They involved me in the process a lot more than happened with the big houses.

KENNEALLY: So really, you are going beyond the book, in that case. It's not just turning in the manuscript and waiting for it to come out. You're heavily involved in the production process, as well.

HISE: Right, which I hadn't been before. I sort of thought you just hand in the book, and walk away, but this time I didn't do that.

KENNEALLY: Do you think you'll expect to be involved in the next one?

HISE: Well, now that I know that it's available, yeah! It was great.

KENNEALLY: And finally, I want to talk about your experience, your other life, if you will. You're a pilot. You've done a lot of flying. I think that really informed the book, *Pilot Error*, it made it possible for you to write in the kind of detail and the kind of confidence about a very technical subject. But flying is a very peculiar thing to do, and it teaches you a lot of different things, I'm sure. Is there an overlap if you're a writer and a pilot? How do they go together?

HISE: When you're flying an airplane, you have to be doing two things simultaneously. You have to be very much in the moment, because obviously you have to be paying attention to flying this airplane and where you are and what's going on, but at the same time you have to be thinking really long term. You've got to be thinking about what's the weather going to be like when I get to my destination? What if something were to happen right now, what would be my emergency procedure? You're simultaneously doing right now thinking and long-term thinking.

I think that's comparable to the way that I think about my writing career, because when I make decisions, I'm not basing them on – Well, for example, when I wrote *Pilot Error*, I had at the same time an opportunity to ghostwrite a book. It would've been a "with," my name would have been on the cover, and it was a lot more money, but I started thinking about it long-term, and I thought five years from now, what's going to be better for me? To have this "with" and the money in the bank that I'm going to get from that or to have my own book which is hard-core non-fiction journalism, narrative journalism with a lot of research. So even though the advance was small, I said, there's just no choice. I have to do this. So you have to think both ways at the same time.

KENNEALLY: There's a rule in flying I've heard, which is "Aviate, navigate, communicate." I guess the first rule is keep the plane in the air, the second is figure out someplace to go, and then tell the tower you're in trouble. It seems to be a great rule for life as well. You really want to keep that plane in the air, keep your career in the air, and further ahead is worrying about telling people how you're doing.

HISE: Right, exactly.

KENNEALLY: Last question – You mentioned about being a collaborator, having the "with" on the front. What did you learn from that experience, and I think it informed, in part, why

you chose not to do the collaboration this time. You feel good about it, I'm sure, but I'm sure you also found some things that are difficult. Tell us about that.

HISE: The book that I collaborated on, *Entrepreneur America*, with Rob Ryan was good for – I got a lot of money for it. It did well, sales wise, and it was a good book, I enjoyed doing it, but it made me realize that that's not what I wanted to do with my career, long-term. The second collaboration that I took was with an executive at Priceline.com, at a time when the company was falling apart, and we were supposed to be working on a book about the collapse of the company and why that happened. It became clear very early on that she and I had very different ideas about how to tell the story. I was so delighted to discover that because I suddenly realized, I have a voice and I have very definite ideas about how to tell a story, and I believe in those ideas. And so that's why I need to be writing my own things. I can't imagine – I have to say never, but I just can't imagine I would ever do another collaboration for that reason, because I want to tell the stories I want to tell, not what someone else wants to tell.

KENNEALLY: Well, thanks. It's great to hear from a writer with real confidence in the work and in the business, so I appreciate your coming. Thank you Phaedra Hise.

HISE: Thank you.

KENNEALLY: I want to introduce, now, David Wallis who is the founder and CEO of Featurewell.com, an online syndicate that markets articles by more than 800 top journalists, including Jimmy Breslin, Andrei Codrescu, and David Margolick. Wallis, himself, a critically acclaimed journalist, contributes to *Wired*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times Magazine*, among other publications. His story about Morocco appeared in Houghton Mifflin's *The Best American Travel Writing*. David, welcome to *Beyond the Book*.

WALLIS: Thank you for having me. Though after a book is done, I would assume that you really would want to go behind the bar.

(laughter)

KENNEALLY: Well, it's funny, as we approached the building here, at the National Press Club, there's Press Liquor downstairs, and I thought, well that can't be. I can't imagine that anyone would need a drink after working on a story. But you started Featurewell two years ago with some of your own money, collaborating with a Website designer, but it was just deciding you were going to do a dotcom. It all started, I think, with an interview with Manuel Noriega and a letter to Jimmy Breslin, and you can take up the story from there.

WALLIS: I started Featurewell when I saw a few things happening, a confluence of events. First off. I interviewed Manuel Noriega in jail. He was unable to go on a book tour for his book –

(laughter)

It was called *My Story* or something to that effect. I brought the book tour to him. Now I sold that story 21 times, and it made over \$20,000 in markets including Russia. I got paid in dollars, not rubles. I changed it into a Q&A for the Spaniards. The Dutch wanted less humor in the piece so I sobered it up. The Germans wanted even less humor.

(laughter)

This is why you never see a German comedian, right? And I tailored the piece and kept on selling it and selling it and selling it. So I was quite amazed by how it really had legs and I was just astounded that one story could make me so much money. Now granted, that was an unusual story. I believe I'm the only print reporter to have interviewed Noriega in jail. So I saw that happening.

At the same time I watched the Internet both grow and threaten writers. I saw the Internet being a wonderful conduit of information. I also saw publishers increasingly seize rights from writers, thinking sort of visions of sugarplums dancing in their head when they thought of all the money that they were going to make on the Internet and really it led to eradication of the way that we used to make money, which was by reselling our work over and over and over again. It's increasingly harder to do that unless you have a little bit of pull, and you negotiate your rights. So I focused on those writers who had that pull, and tried to create a critical mass of high-quality journalism online that editors, with a click, could have access to and buy, and then I give the writers 60% of the gross, which is one of the higher, more generous splits in the industry.

Jimmy Breslin was the first major name that signed up with Featurewell. I had written him a letter explaining my goal and my desire to create a writer-friendly syndicate online. I didn't hear from him until about three months later. My message on my answering machine, something like, 'Hello, Jimmy Breslin,' with this unmistakable voice. There are occasionally times where I have edited him and that's been, of course, a privilege and an honor. When I say "edited," it's more as if a column has been written and there's a question or two that I might have for an international market. I'll never forget when I suggested, would he like that clause in brackets, 'I hate brackets. Goddamn brackets.' That was the end of the conversation.

(laughter)

Literally, he hung up. So for those of you editing Jimmy Breslin, it's no brackets. Well that's really Featurewell – Just to bring you up to speed, two years later Featurewell represents more than 850 journalists, including several Pulitzer Prize winners and National Magazine Award winners. We have nearly 1000 clients at newspapers, magazines, and Websites around the world who are buying stories, we're a small growing firm, and this year we'll probably gross in the \$200,000 range. So it means that writers will probably get somewhere between \$75,000 and \$120,000 that we'll pay out to writers this year.

KENNEALLY: David, in that time, in the two years you've been doing this, you've learned what sells and what doesn't sell and probably just as importantly, how to sell to markets in this country and abroad. Can you talk about that. What kinds of stories do sell and maybe tell us what you expected to sell and what has turned out to be not so popular.

WALLIS: What sells, unfortunately celebrity-oriented stories sell. I'm not a big fan of them. I declared Featurewell to be a Pamela Anderson-free zone and I have kept to that standard, but I still sell some celebrity stories and they're easy to sell anywhere.

KENNEALLY: But rock music stories, you said, don't sell.

WALLIS: For some reason, and I really don't know why, I haven't sold that many book reviews and music-related stories. I have sold a fair amount of international politics and plenty of U.S. politics. It seems as if American publications are far less interested in foreign stories, even to this day. After 9/11, you really would think that we would be more interested, increasingly interested in stories about the world out there that's affecting us so much. Unfortunately, that tends not to be the case. Yet foreign publications are quite interested in U.S. politics. I also represent Dick Morris and I sell a lot of Dick Morris columns around the world. So that's something that sells. Health translates very well. Everyone cares about their health, whether they're in Sri Lanka or St. Louis. So technology stories sell quite well. Again, that's something that translates very well – the Internet is international. Sex sells, stories about sex. It doesn't have to be pornography. It could be – though, I'm open to it. No, not really.

We do try to focus on high quality writing and one thing that I'll say is, start thinking about foreign markets because you travel around the world on assignments you have the cachet of being an American writer and you can meet editors abroad. And really, with the Internet, it's no longer a question of faxing and Fed Exing photos. It really makes it easy. And if you go to foreign newspapers' Websites, and you take a little time and effort, you can easily find – and it's true of domestic Websites as well, and you can find the editor's e-mail address. Usually it's lurking in the Website. They don't make it easy for you, so you have to look in maybe the corporate information, About Us, Contact Us, you really have to search and do a little reporting. But you get the section editor's e-mail addresses and that can be a really easy way to make contacts abroad because people are open

Also, when you send queries and stories to foreign editors and I would argue any editor today, don't send them attachments or links. One, trust me, they are not going to click on the link and look at your Website. They won't do it. Two, everyone's nervous of a virus, they are not going to open up an attachment. Send it as text. They can then request an attachment, but send it as text in your e-mail. I hope that's a little bit of practical information for you when you're pitching.

KENNEALLY: Absolutely. And something else about the Internet is that it really brings everyone together into that single marketplace, at least through Featurewell –

WALLIS: I call it Featurehell sometimes.

KENNEALLY: (laughter) But you have to internationalize a piece. If you are going to sell it to, let's say the Independent in London, maybe it's about changing the spelling from C-O-L-O-R to O-U-R, but there's more than that, right?

WALLIS: Right. They really take care of the tidying up, of translating from American English to British English or Australian English.

KENNEALLY: But still, you need to be aware that this is a British reading public who may not be familiar with some things that we take for granted, perhaps.

WALLIS: Absolutely. If you mention, for instance, in your piece the Houston Astros, describe it as an American baseball team. That actually tends to help. But really I think one of the keys is to just try and read foreign newspapers and read foreign magazines and read the publications that you're interested in pitching to. If you don't, you can be embarrassed by offering, for instance, an article on morel mushrooms to a food section that just ran, a week ago, an article on chanterelles. That might not be the best idea. Maybe they're mushroomed out. But read the publications that you're trying to market to.

KENNEALLY: You have told me that the alternative weeklies have really proven to be a terrific source of opportunity for free lancers. Why is that the case? What are they looking for? Is there an article profile?

WALLIS: I wouldn't say there's an article profile, per se. I would say that they tend to be more open to – just in the name alone, they are open to unusual ideas. So you have much more of a chance with something of a fringe idea that's not mainstream. I have a quirky sense of humor and Featurewell reflects that, so I probably have more left tendencies than right tendencies, though I'm non-partisan in my editing, so I've attracted those clients. We're one of the main syndicates that the alternative press goes to when they're looking for articles. But the great thing about alternative weeklies is that they let you keep your rights. It's really not a question because they're not paying you a lot of money, so you can take a national story and you can maybe sell it eight or ten times and do OK with it, make it worth your while.

KENNEALLY: And finally, David, is interesting that although Featurewell really relies on the Internet, it would not be possible without that technology. It really speaks to the fact that newspapers are probably not as close to their death as may have been reported. The newspaper is alive and flourishing. Would you agree, or how do you see it from your perspective.

WALLIS: I'm bullish on newspapers. I think as Americans age – I'll talk about the American newspaper industry which is I'm bullish and I'm also nervous. I'm bullish because as Americans age, they tend to become newspaper readers. Nobody likes to read an article

online that's more than 700 words, or very few people. I don't think that's really any different. I don't buy that young people today are the MTV generation, so they're called, because they supposedly have short attention spans and they're apathetic. I think that's all rubbish, piffle, crap. I think that people are going to be reading newspapers as they age. What newspapers, of course, have to do, is provide more analysis. Because you can get spot news online, and quicker than a newspaper can deliver it. So a newspaper's going to, I think, increasingly be more about analysis.

Why I'm nervous about newspapers and magazines is because I'm watching a conglomeration of the medium. We had an election the other day, and I hear that the new Commerce Secretary, John McCain (?), a man I admire, is nevertheless very in the corner of Michael Powell, who's the current FCC chief. Powell wants to really deregulate the media and make it easier even for more conglomeration in the media. And more conglomeration in the media is generally bad for democracy, in my opinion. As we have fewer outlets and fewer sources of news, the American people are going to be more spoon fed by huge corporations, of information and I think we have to be very cognizant of that.

There's a backlash that might happen, that we might see, which is newspapers that cut out content, that trim their book sections, that just give you wire reports, that repackage or repurpose the news are going to see, in my opinion, circulation declines. And the papers that provide quality to the readers are going to see circulation increases. What we may see in society – this is just my crazy thought – is that the one newspaper town that has a really terrible newspaper because they've become complacent, we might see a second newspaper pop up again. A resurgence of the second newspaper, and wouldn't that be great.

One thing I do want to say before I end is just, read your contracts. You're signing contracts with these huge corporations. I think it's important that writers, of all people, read their contracts. If you don't like something, and you have the flexibility – you may not always have the flexibility – you walk away from that contract. That's a hard thing. I don't agree, respectfully, with Phaedra. Salon is a terrible contract – a terrible, terrible contract. Three years you sign away your piece for and they pay you crap.

HISE: But it's non-exclusive.

WALLIS: Actually, if you read that contract a little more carefully, you would find that it is exclusive and it's – you can because you negotiated it. You did negotiate it. So cheers for Phaedra for negotiating it. But the thing is that you might not be doing that because you're just signing on the dotted line. If you get an assignment from *The New Yorker*, and they're sending you to Rio and they want all rights, you sign that contract.

(laughter)

Now if it's not a market leader and it's a smaller publication and you have the opportunity maybe to go to a larger publication or their competitor, a lot of times that

you'll find that the editor will negotiate with you. They'll negotiate with you because what they're really concerned about is publishing first, not necessarily holding the rights forever, so I just want you to think about that as you move forward today. Thank you for listening.

KENNEALLY: David, thank you very much indeed, and hopefully with your work, we'll keep the newspapers alive and we'll see more of them. That'd be great.

Now we're going to turn really to the book publishing world with Caroline Newman, who is Executive Editor at Smithsonian Institution Press, where she acquires both trade and scholarly titles. Ms. Newman's 16 years of publishing experience includes special expertise in illustrated books and major exhibition catalogs. Some recent award winning titles she acquired for Smithsonian Press include *Vikings: The Transatlantic Saga*, *Legacies: Collecting America's History at the Smithsonian*, *The American Presidency*, and *Captive Passage: The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Making of the Americas*. In prior posts at the Smithsonian, Ms. Newman served as Director for New Media, and Executive Editor for Book Development. Before joining the Press, she was an instructor in comparative literature at the University of California, Berkeley. Welcome, Caroline.

NEWMAN: Thank you. Thanks for having me.

KENNEALLY: We've heard Phaedra describe her reasons for choosing between a large press and a small press, and I'd like to ask you to play a kind of Goldilocks role here and give us the argument for the midsize press, the one that's just right, maybe. On Smithsonian's Website, in fact the question is posed in the FAQ for authors, why should I publish my book, and it goes right to the heart of that. It says, "As a midsize publisher, we can devote more time, energy, and attention to editing, designing, promoting, and marketing your book." Talk about that effort, that investment and what it means to you, as an editor, but also to the authors.

NEWMAN: Well, I think the very fact that we include that information on our Website is telling. We're actually pitching ourselves and trying to encourage you to think of us as a quality partner for your project, particularly in the university press world, where I have a lot of familiarity. There's a strong commitment to trying to make the best book possible. What motivates that type of publisher is not the commercial gain, it's really the contribution to knowledge. So the scholarly process begins with sending projects out for review. We see that as very much not just the gatekeeper function of finding out whether or not we think this merits publication, but actually a chance for the author to benefit from having a critical friend as a reader. So it begins really even before the book is signed on. Not all small houses do this. Most university presses do send out manuscripts to at least two readers.

At a smaller house, design is also an integrated process. What happens at the very large houses, I understand – I've never worked at one – is that they often go with an interior design that is canned or sort of formulaic and just freelance the jacket. For us, design is all about the quality of the finished project, its integrity throughout.

As for promotion and marketing, obviously very large trade houses have a particular kind of energy that a small house does not have, but as Phaedra said, at a smaller house, you're the big fish in the pond. If you have a really strong trade project that's at a university press, you're going to be one of their lead titles. I think that's very advantageous. You might end up even on the cover of the catalogue. Certainly you will be supported for a much longer period of time. The way the trade houses work is often a book has about a three-month opportunity to establish itself in the marketplace. A university press type approach, or a more scholarly, or even a small press, I think, tends to be dedicated to a project over the years, and to continue to support it through direct mail campaigns, through, for example, attendance at conferences has been very important for us. So we're constantly making people aware of things that are on our backlist, not just pushing that hot, in our case about 40 titles a season, which is the front list of new books.

KENNEALLY: It sounds to me that in that particular piece of *Beyond the Book*, it's about the relationship. It's not just the product itself. It's important to you to be thinking that you're going to be living with the author and living with the book, right? You just don't get it out the door and say goodbye and go on to the next project.

NEWMAN: Yes, and sometimes the honeymoon is over, but we've got to stay in the marriage.

(laughter)

KENNEALLY: Then let me ask you – You're still an editor, you still have to get the book done. I wonder whether there's been any kind of specially illustrative example of how you've helped a writer fight writer's block.

NEWMAN: Yes, actually, I love this question about writer's block because I am truly an editor because of writer's block. Now have I been able, successfully, to help others? I like to think so. I can tell you at the press, we have one author in particular who will remain nameless. We often talk about how she wrote five books and the published one is not one of them.

(laughter)

And probably about five other people at the press would try to claim they ought to be on that title page. But certainly there are options. If there is a tale that needs to be told, whether it's a scholarly tale, or because I'm based at a museum, sometimes related to Smithsonian activities, we will marry a project with either a book doctor – I don't know if you all know that term, but there are professional book doctors who can help shape an existing manuscript. Sometimes they work directly with the author, I don't know, Phaedra, how your collaborations went, but there's that option. There's also the option of bringing on a – well, in my case what I've done is commissioned co-authors. I don't like the ghost – It's a personal thing, I think the ghostwriter thing is a little bit weird. I'd really rather bring somebody on the project and make sure that the chemistry is right

between both the author and the person who's going to help them tell their story, so we've done that as well.

KENNEALLY: One thing you've done for everybody here, and I think it's a terrific opportunity. We'll have them for you after the first part of the program, but you've brought along some sample proposals – proposals that in fact you have bought. And they're illustrative in many ways and they cover the wide ground that Smithsonian covers, really, from the very scholarly to the, if you will, more commercial project. I'd like to talk about some of the elements there. In one of them that is a scholarly work, it really follows an outline that I believe was provided by the press that requests certain information and describe the project, describe your background. And yet, for reasons that I want you to describe, it stood out for you. What was it that takes an ordinary proposal, one that kind of fills in the dots or connects the dots and makes it something you say, I want to buy this?

NEWMAN: I actually need to say that particular proposal, which is a book project on New Orleans, has not been proposed yet. I have the author's leave, though, to share this material with you. I am going to be proposing it and it is a fine, scholarly project in my view and the reason is we receive lots of proposals in the disciplines in which we publish, but where all of us editors are very excited when somebody has an interesting combination of truly interdisciplinary approach. Many people use that word, but what they're doing isn't interdisciplinary at all. This project, if you take a look at it, you'll see, it's deeply, deeply moving across fields. It's a scholar who's looking at not only literary sources but popular culture and historical documents to look at the evolving cultural history of New Orleans, which is a fascinatingly hybrid town, and that's what this book is all about – what makes it so unique.

The background of this particular person, actually I'm a little embarrassed to say after realizing that was in my bio, this person is from a background we often don't publish, but he's a literary scholar, and his field is comparative literature. This is very much a reading – a very textured reading – of New Orleans. And that's also what appeals to me. But I haven't convinced the rest of the editors yet, so maybe –

KENNEALLY: OK, well, with that caveat. There's another proposal that goes, I think, almost to the other end of the spectrum, and it's on a well-known 20<sup>th</sup> century statesman, we'll say right now, and the very first page is titled "The Audience," and it puts the audience first. I want to ask you about why that's an effective approach in a book proposal and does the audience always come first for you.

NEWMAN: Yes, but there are many different kinds of audiences. This particular proposal, which I also have leave to talk about, we have signed, and it's a biography of Sargent Shriver, the exclusive authorized biography, so I knew you all could (laughter) walk away with that concept, not that I was worried.

This project is very much built around the platform of a famous person, a famous person whose life is full of accomplishment. It's quite a moving and inspiring story. I included

that proposal to let you see that having that marketing information sit right up front – when that’s what you have to sell, that’s why people want to read this book, because they want to relive the ‘60s and the ‘70s, particularly during the Kennedy and the Johnson Administration, go on to see what happened to all those programs that Sargent Shriver started, from Peace Corps to Head Start to the Job Corps to his ambassadorship in France. He is the platform and I think that his fame quotient is important, but even more important is that there are easily targetable, identifiable, multiple audiences who will buy this book. A publisher absolutely wants to know there are prequalified – for a major trade title – that there’s a prequalified audience who is going to part with \$20 to buy this book. In this case, those Peace Corps people – that’s a heart and soul audience and they love this man. He’s an inspiration. So we’re counting on those tens of thousands of Peace Corps volunteers, those Head Start teachers, we see them as the natural – We can’t go wrong. They won’t return books (laughter).

KENNEALLY: It’s funny, you know, I think of the pen myself, or the keyboard, as a kind of microphone. It allows you to talk. So when you talk, unless you’re like me, sometimes, at the house, you talk to yourself, most of the time you are talking to someone else. You are trying to communicate. A book really is that. Perhaps there are writers who write for themselves, but they’re probably also thinking, well, my wife, my daughter, my friends, will want to read this, and then by extension, the audience grows and grows and grows, so there always should be an audience. You can’t write without an audience in mind.

NEWMAN: Correct. You can’t sell, for sure.

KENNEALLY: And in that same proposal, I think they include talking about extraordinary promotional opportunities. As a publisher, or I should say as an editor, rather, do you expect to see authors tell you about the promotional opportunities, and should it be that detailed?

NEWMAN: I think this is an exceptional case. In those extraordinary promotional opportunities, I think the first bullet is the fact that it’s quite likely, once the Shriver biography comes out, which by the way, is by Scott Stossel, I should have mentioned that, a senior editor at *Atlantic Monthly*. He’ll probably be on Maria Shriver’s show. It’s kind of interesting phenomenon, the father appearing on their daughter’s dateline news thing, but he has those kinds of connections, and yes, we are interested in hearing about them. That allows us to be confident in investing more money in the project.

Also, I think in the package, I included a proposal related to the – you fed me that one – bicentennial national exhibition catalogue associated with the Lewis and Clark traveling show opening next January 4 at the Missouri Historical Society. For that particular opportunity – that’s another proposal, but you’ll see there’s a lot of emphasis on all the places along the Lewis and Clark Trail that will be hosting events. Because each one of them is again, a prequalified audience. Anyone who’s interested in what’s going on in Lewis and Clark anywhere along the trail is another potential customer for this large book that is associated with a nationally touring exhibition.

We've done a lot of these at this point in time, obviously being at the Smithsonian, that's an opportunity we've had, and I can tell you that knowing that a national show is touring into certain national venues automatically translates to us in a certain sales figure. I think with our Vikings project, we're probably at about 70,000 books now, and that's because every time that show moved to a new venue, we saw a big surge in our sales, a lot of them coming from that particular museum shop, wherever it's currently opening.

KENNEALLY: I just want to add though, that perhaps people in the audience they think, well, of course, for an enormous show like that, or for a book by or about Sargent Shriver, there'll be lots of opportunities, but the lesson that can be drawn, and I want to just cite my own experience, I wrote a book on the history of Massachusetts and it was very convincing with the publisher saying, I'm on the board of my local historical society. I know people who are on other historical societies. I'm willing to go out and speak to those various groups. I'll bring the book along, I'll help to sell it. I'll make it possible for them to order it, whatever. And so even though the scale may be different with a Smithsonian book, the lesson there is to really examine where are the opportunities, where are the places, the markets, that the individual can identify and then enlist the help, as Phaedra did, of the publicity department of the publisher or wherever else you need to go. You don't have to do it alone, and you don't have to really be in the big time, but the lesson is that you have to think about it and be prepared before you go out with a book. Caroline, thank you very much.

NEWMAN: Thank you.

KENNEALLY: Finally, I want to introduce Gerard Colby, who's got some news for us about that very important relationship between authors and publishers. Gerry is the former National Vice President and current Co-Chair of the National Book Division of the National Writers Union and has just been involved with conducting a survey of over 600 NWU members who have had contracts with the top five houses in the United States. Bertelsmann, which encompasses now Random House, Doubleday and Bantam, Simon & Schuster, Harper Collins, Penguin, and Houghton Mifflin.

Gerry himself, of course, is a writer as well. His articles have appeared in *The Nation*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The Burlington Free Press*, among many other publications. He's the author of *Du Pont: Behind the Nylon Curtain*, which was the subject of a landmark Federal case that won promotional rights for authors, as well as *Du Pont Dynasty*. He's the co-author, with Charlotte Dennett of *Thy Will Be Done, the conquest of the Amazon: Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in the Age of Oil*, and he's a collaborator in a recently published anthology on the current state of investigative Journalism in the United States, which is entitled, *Into the Buzzsaw*. And he's currently working with Ms. Dennett on a new book on the U.S. in the Middle East, which he has signed with Harper Collins. Welcome, Gerry.

Before we talk about the specifics of the survey, I wonder if you can admit to some of the assumptions you might have had going into this. What did you expect to hear from authors? It's my belief that if you scratch an author, you get a story about a publisher

and it's not usually good story. But that's the way of the relationship, I think. It doesn't mean, necessarily, that one or the other is good or bad, but just that there's always something to say about that relationship. What did you expect to hear, and then maybe tell us what you have found from the survey itself.

COLBY: Our assumptions were based upon our experiences in looking at grievances that were coming in from authors, members of our National Writers Union, which is a union of 7000 members across the country. Most of the complaints that have come in to the grievance division had been, however, from publishers who were either small or midlevel. These are not bellwether firms in the industry, as such, but they were the classic complaints about promotion, lack of promotion, lack of adequate advertising. But there is still an assumption that a lot of these problems were not necessarily reflected in the larger publishing houses, however, that the large publishing houses may very well be watching to see how these practices may be being accepted more and more by authors. We were worried about the deterioration of standards inside, particularly among the bellwether firms. I had some assumptions, too.

I come from a background where I was involved in that lawsuit against Du Pont Company's interference against my book on them and the family, and pressure that was put on Book of the Month Club to drop the book. That was a political interference. However, one of the things that I found in this survey is that the practice of killing off books, quietly, how actually most books are censored in the United States is not by the government, of course people realize, it's really the private industry, and it's called "privashing" in the industry. That's the term that's used. It means to publish a book privately so that it sinks without a trace is how it's usually in that context. You cut off the life support system, the advertising budget, the promotional tour, and you get rid of this troublesome title.

It may be politically motivated intervention, but what we've discovered now, as a result of this survey, is that this practice is now being undertaken for purely business reasons. And this has to do with what we believe is some structural changes inside the industry that we're now living in an era where the editors, the old church as we used to call them, are being pushed back and back from their former positions of influence by the state, which are the bean counters of the conglomerates that are taking over these publishing houses.

We're watching some major changes occur, not only for contractual performance by these publishers, but also the quality of books, and that was also one of my biggest surprises in this, to see the number of complaints that were coming in, some houses more than others, but to see these complaints coming in about sloppy editing, not getting enough time to even examine fully what editors were saying to them, real complaints about the production process itself. I was surprised by that because my experience with my publisher in production has been very good. Now this seems to be creeping into the large houses.

The second point is that large houses traditionally actually provided some of the promotion and advertising budgets that you would expect that a large house would. Now midlevel or mid-list authors don't actually get the kind of promotional tours that a celebrity author would, but they usually got something. When I started writing in 1970, that was the case, even though my first editor was already on speed, trying to deliver more and more titles, which is a harbinger, really, of the future. Now, since the conglomerates have come in and taken over, and by the way, let's not forget, these are the same conglomerates that own companies like CBS. Viacom owns CBS. Or companies like Fox Broadcasting controlled by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. who also controls my publishing house.

What we're seeing is a real pressure being put on the editors to back off, to allow the titles to go out in volume. Now I'm not talking about the numbers of copies of books, I'm talking about just the number of titles that are going out – more and more titles. There's an assumption that more is always better. Hey, I think we've learned something in the last generation, it's not always the case, and especially for in a democracy that requires an informed citizenry. If you have titles that don't last on the shelf more than two to six weeks before they're sent back to the publisher, and the publisher then remands them, usually back to the same box chains, Barnes & Noble, Borders, where they're quickly sold off. That's if you're lucky.

In some cases now, these titles are coming back in boxes that are not even opened by the houses, backlist orders are not even being met. In some cases, these boxes are being put on crates and they're being sent out to warehouses where, because the concern over inventory taxes, publishers are encouraged by the situation to burn them. I have a major house – I can tell you, books are being burned in America right now.

KENNEALLY: Let me ask you this: The survey is an effort, I think, to know what the current state is for people and to – as I understand your own personal goal, to help to establish some standards. If you're an author, and we've been hearing here about the various things that people can do for themselves and for their books, are there some standards that you suggest that every author keep in mind when preparing to sign a contract?

COLBY: One of the things you would hope is that an author should expect that a publisher will live up to the contractual obligations that they undertake. That's one of the biggest problems that we have in this industry. Publishers just routinely breach their contracts, especially when we get into the stage of promotion and advertising. You know, there's a Federal court decision, in case anybody needs to know about it, that was done in 1981, actually written by an appeals court, never struck down, that states that to publish a book is not simply to print it. If you publish a book, you have a contractual obligation to promote and to establish an advertising budget commensurate with its expected market. You've got to give a book a chance, in other words.

KENNEALLY: What are some other things, standards, that every writer should see in a contract?

COLBY: A writer should expect a standard royalty rate, not the declining royalty rates that we've been seeing. What we've been watching is with the mass marketing of books, with that philosophy taking over of soft covers moving into hardcover titles, what we've also been seeing is the standards around royalty rates starting to decline to the level of mass market paperback as well. You should expect, and authors should know, what their standard rate is for a hardcover versus paperback. This is a biggest problem that we have in the writers union, we spend a lot of time in education. But I can tell you, most authors do not understand what industry standards are. Frankly, most authors do not understand the publishing industry. I think they have the attitude they hand in the book and they expect the publisher will do for them what you would expect. If we had a psychiatrist's couch –

KENNEALLY: Yes, well I was going to ask you that. If you put an author on the couch and you're Dr. Freud, what is the neurosis or the compulsion that the author has right now. Is there a way to –

COLBY: It's not a neurosis. It's really someone who is a jilted lover. This is an author that goes in, spends years on a book, hands a book in to a publisher, expects the publisher to deliver at least along the contractual obligations, and what you'll find is that very often – this I'm talking now, the large bellwether firms – you'll find that a publisher will start, and not even explain, but will start to cut back on performance.

KENNEALLY: What about – I'm going to ask you to tell us some good news, though. Is it not all bad news? I'm sure there's some good news in the survey. You have found some things that point to – Well, we could say this: You can't have contracts without negotiations. Both sides have to engage each other. Clearly it's a moment in publishing where the two sides seem to be more at odds than not, but in order for both to continue and to thrive, they do need to come together and come to some kinds of understanding, some kind of standards, and you're seeing that, too, happen, right?

COLBY: Well, we're starting to see – Look, the first step for negotiations is more of an equal playing field. Our problem as writers, as freelance writers, is that we're stuck with potentially antitrust law violations, which is one of the reasons we're going to Congress now to try to get an exemption for freelance writers, similar to what trade unions, for instance, were given in the 1930s, so we can begin to discuss this from a position of collectively, as members that might write for Harper Collins or might write for Simon & Schuster.

But the other part of this is understanding on the part of authors that they actually have rights that can be won. Right now, they feel that they are completely powerless. Now part of that is because they haven't crossed over the first bridge toward actively engaging. If you actively engage a publisher, very often, you can get concessions. Because I agree with one of my colleagues here who made the point that the first job of a publisher is to publish. That's really what they want to do. Now, we can argue about what they want, why they're publishing, or why a bean counter might look at the goal differently than an editor would, but the point is that they are publishing books. So you

start from that perspective and you engage and you go back and forth. We find that if you do that, you get really some results.

Earlier, when I was thinking about this, and before a lot of more returns came in on this survey, and by the way, they're still coming in, so we're still studying the results, I thought the problems were not going to be production. I was actually delighted to see fewer complaints. But lo and behold, that changed, and the earlier comments I made about the quality of books really started to come in, particularly, by the way, from one house. Which is a shocker.

KENNEALLY: Well, I think we've gotten the message from everybody here on the panel that it's about being confident in your position as a writer or as an editor, and trying to engage people. We're going to engage you in a question and answer session after a short break and we'll be back in about 10 minutes. There'll be some refreshments outside. Thank you.

(applause)

END OF TAPE