



Beyond the Book[®]



“The Future of Reading” at Book Expo America 2008

KENNEALLY: Well welcome indeed to Book Expo 2008. My name is Chris Kenneally. I'm delighted to host a special panel discussion here. I am the moderator of a program called “Beyond the Book” which is underwritten by the nonprofit Copyright Clearance Center and which can be found at beyondthebook.com. And joining me will be a number of panelists to take a look at a rather slightly ambitious subject and that is the future of reading. And it strikes me that it's not only the future of reading but the future of readers, the future readers themselves, who they are, the future of publishing and finally the future of books.

And I called to mind something I remember reading about the Lumiere brothers who were the inventors of really the first practical film cameras at the end of the 19th century and one of them said that the cinema was an invention without a future. And clearly missed that a little bit considering here we are in Los Angeles with Hollywood just down the street. But I can imagine that if Gutenberg were to invent movable type again today he would probably have the same kind of lament given the competition that the book world has with so much other media. He might think that he would say to himself the book was an invention without a future. And yet what kind of a future is it? Well we can judge a little bit by the past. There's been some numbers released recently that show that 277,000 new book titles were published in 2007, which represents something like a 1% increase over the previous year and still sounds like a lot of books to me.

And interestingly the number of print-on-demand, short-run and nontraditional book publishing, that is growing enormously so individual authors really have great faith in the book themselves. Those numbers have increased from 21,000 in 2006 to 135,000 such titles in 2007. So it's dramatic and I think we're going to expect to see that continue. But for the discussion I want to turn first to Paul Dry. Welcome Paul.

DRY: Welcome Chris. Thanks for having me.

KENNEALLY: Very delighted to have you. And Paul is, if I can name him, a kind of evangelical figure for me at least in publishing. He started Paul Dry books after many years trading stock options on the Philadelphia Stock Exchange and at least as many years if not more reading books. His first books appeared in the year 2000 and the Paul Dry book motto is books to awaken, delight and educate. The list includes adults and young adult fiction, memoir, philosophy, poetry and history. And offers new writing, works in translation, and republication of out-of-print titles. But he has an author on his list who first published a book several years ago – in 2004 I believe – Gabriel Zaid. And in an age of distraction. And Paul those two phrases, age of abundance and age of distraction seem to mean a lot to Gabriel. And tell me what they mean to you.

DRY: Well I think we're all faced with the phenomena of too-muchness. Certainly at the BEA almost everyone walking down the aisle either feels overwhelmed or has learned how to screen out a good bit of what they've walked by. So in abundance – what did you say, 290-some-thousand titles?

KENNEALLY: 277,000 new titles.

DRY: 277,000 and that abundance creates distractions. In addition to all those titles of course the endless time we spend on the Internet either with e-mail or visiting Web sites. What does that mean about reading a book from beginning to end? Well we're distracted from that activity. And I think that's what Gabriel was getting at – all of the ways we can be distracted from finishing – from reading a complete book. It's very easy on the Web to skate around and it's very easy to hop from one book to another without ever giving yourself the chance to finish a book. Now obviously people here are readers but we've all experienced the overload and the enticement to hop from one Web page to another, from one author to another.

KENNEALLY: And the distraction affects all aspects of publishing. We tried to get Gabriel to come and join us today and he had a tremendous reply, I think an e-mail to you. What did he say?

DRY: Well Chris asked me to print it out and there it is down at the booth. Essentially he said he wanted readers, he didn't want viewers. And in fact we don't have permission to print his photograph on the book. He really is serious about wanting people to read his book and not wanting to become an object of a spectacle. Much of the book *The Secret of Fame* is about the possible emptiness of literary fame and as a diversion away from the experience the reader has of the book itself.

KENNEALLY: And that impacts the reader, it seems to me, because we're all susceptible to the attraction of fame and so we're drawn to the famous writer, if you will, and bounced around as the media directs us from one famous or newly-coined famous person to another. And it gets to that point you mentioned of the need to read something completely.

DRY: I know it's passé to say that a book should have a beginning, middle and end. And the French – the film director Godard said fine but not necessarily in that order. I do think things – that books with beginnings, middles and ends in that order, as the author decided what the order was, are really – that's the treasure. That's what we carry around in our imagination. And some of these books we take in so rapidly it's pure joy and others take a lot of work. When I first read Tolstoy I was about 25 and I thought life had passed me by. And I started reading Tolstoy and I looked around, it was absolutely empty, the room. And I was looking for the person I could blame for not telling me to read *War and Peace* sooner. If they'd only told me it was so easy and so much fun, I would have thought what the hell, I'll read it at 16. *War and Peace* is a long read but those of us who have skated into it it's just an endless pleasure like one box of popcorn after another.

KENNEALLY: Well since you're competing – your books and all books are competing with this abundance of media – what do you think the future of books then will be and the future of your books? Have you got a degree of optimism or are you resigned to a niche?

DRY: Well no one can say what the future of the books he or she publishes will be. That seems to be up to the fates. Certainly the future of reading is as assured as the future of eating. We'll continue to eat and we'll continue to read. Of course what we eat and what we read will be up to us and what we find nourishing. So I would argue that the future of reading and of books in particular and of my books will depend on whether readers find them nourishing and pass that on.

KENNEALLY: So if you would, just to continue the metaphor of eating, there's food, of course. There's fast food and slow food and good food and bad food. Does it matter with reading about good reading and bad reading and so forth?

DRY: Well we've all probably been to McDonald's and we know it's fun. And we've all read books that are like McDonald's and they're fun. No one's going to cross the so-called junk books off the list or the good books or the very good books. But when you've come across the good book, the great book, it's – the calories are better, to stay in the metaphor. That doesn't mean they're easy to read. And I'm in a book group and very often we'll end up reading a book that I never would have read. And the harness of the book group pulls me along and I read the book. And I think, as you harness yourself to a book that otherwise you wouldn't have, you have an opportunity to have a great reading experience. Now book clubs are thriving in America, even as we lament the fate of reading. So I'm not discouraged at all about reading. As a small publisher it's I find it very hard to get attention for my books but welcome to the world. I suppose the big publishers find it hard to get attention for their books, too. It's all on scale.

KENNEALLY: And the competition that books have today with other media is one where it brings them up against – the work of the imagination against the work of the image, if you will. And the notion of reading that we all enjoyed as a small

child, perhaps, under the blanket at night with the flashlight, the imagination took control – is there anything lost as imagination diminishes and images grow in power?

DRY: Surely I think so but I would just tout the activity of imagining that a book allows the reader to experience and that it's your image of Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch*. It's your image of Long John Silver or your child's image and the child has made that image and you as an adult have made it. And we all know the sense of letdown, really, when you see the movie. Oh that's not how I imagined that figure. Well we're not going to do away with movies but we shouldn't let them co-opt our imagining activity. We should know that it's a little harder to make up Natasha in your mind than to see a beautiful young actress enact Natasha, but it's your Natasha and it never goes away. And curiously your Natasha and your friend's Natasha is something you hold in common as an act that you created individually but that you have in common. The Natasha on the movie screen is neither of yours. It's the one that the movie made. So that's my plea for reading in terms of a possession you have and never is taken away.

KENNEALLY: Well I think the audience can better understand now why I say you have this evangelical theory of publishing. Thank you very much, Paul.

DRY: Thank you, Chris.

KENNEALLY: What I'd like to do next though is turn to someone who really has a different perspective, one very much tied to books but very much also looking ahead to the future. And that's Ana Maria Alessi who was named publisher of HarperMedia in March 2005. She first joined HarperCollins Publishers in 2001 and now oversees publication of all adult and children's audio titles and all HarperCollins e-books. For HarperCollins Audio she's published many classic children's books, including Laura Ingalls Wilder and C.S. Lewis and many frontlist authors including Lemony Snicket and Jamie Lee Curtis. There was a recent announcement which you may have read about where Harper is now – has its own Internet TV studio in its offices in New York and that was what caught my eye. And so I guess my first question, Ana Marie – and first, welcome.

ALLESSI: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

KENNEALLY: Very nice to have you here. My first question is what's going on at Harper? I thought you guys were book publishers.

ALLESSI: Well we are author publishers. The way that I try to communicate what we're collectively trying to do is that in my opinion we're trying to talk about authors as much as we talk about books. And that is a subtle but important distinction. And all of our efforts are moving towards putting an author in front of a consumer so that, to use Paul's reference, why didn't somebody tell me about this great book when I was 16 instead of 25, what we're trying to do is make sure that

those books and those authors are out there and in front of potential consumers because there is a lot of distractions, potential distractions. And a lot of our job is to make sure that a consumer knows that there's a new publication and that they would be interested in reading it for some very good reasons.

KENNEALLY: How do your authors respond to that? The classic picture of the author is alone a room with his typewriter or number-two pencil. And here you're really encouraging them to come out of their studio and into the real world.

ALLESSI: Well authors want to be read and that's where we start the conversation. We want to go find as many readers as possible for you and here is a menu of all of our different efforts and it involves people all across different departments. And we see that obviously as the end goal is to have more readership – or listenership – and they appreciate it very much. And they're a tremendously enthusiastic and happy to partner with us. We are approaching them in a much more collaborative way now and saying this is what our expertise is, this is how we think we can contribute to your efforts and here is a road map that we've put together and what can you do? And basically they say we'll do pretty much whatever you want us to do because it will lead to more readers.

KENNEALLY: Now your Internet TV studio has only been open for a short time so it's hard to draw any really substantive conclusions but what kind of activities have been going on and has it been just book promotion or more than that?

ALLESSI: It currently has only been book promotion. It's been up for about 30 days and we've had nearly 35 authors in. We are using it to spread the word of what they're doing, whether it's a current publication or a future publication or in the case of Simon Winchester, to come in and comment on current events. We talk about how it's modeled after a newsroom environment and that is because we hope to be able to pull people in and get the video posted very quickly to take advantage of anything that might be happening in the news or any publicity opportunities. And it's gone very well. We have a tremendously talented producer but she hasn't had to work too hard because when you ask an author to talk about their work, it's usually pretty darn fascinating. They have great stories to tell about how they came to this project and what the result of their effort was.

KENNEALLY: And Paul talks a great deal about the conversation that books and authors have with readers and here it seems to me you're encouraging that kind of conversation and the way that people correspond or interact with others today is increasing through the Internet so if you were to record that, presumably you could have something up this afternoon about a response to the earthquake in China if you had someone who was an expert in that.

ALLESSI: Like Simon Winchester.

KENNEALLY: Absolutely.

ALLESSI: His new book is about China. So absolutely.

KENNEALLY: And where does that put Harper in the picture? Increasingly the media, which was the gateway to news, publicity, is receding because you can go directly to the Web. Is that something you're banking on, you can get directly to the individual?

ALLESSI: Yes. A lot of what we do at Harper is to try to bring efforts in-house and do things ourselves. And this is another example of that. For a variety of reasons we think that that makes a strong approach. And yes, absolutely. So now we can create the product and we can be effective in placing it in a variety of ways. We give it back to the marketing and direct marketing and publicity departments and they tailor its placement for each individual author and book.

KENNEALLY: It strikes me that that's also ensuring the future of publishing in a way, if we're talking about the future of reading here. The publisher has to continue to have a valuable role in this because otherwise it could just be author direct to reader. I'm not saying that that's bad, necessarily, but if publishers want to stay in business they need to find ways to add value to the equation.

ALLESSI: Yes. And we do think that we can add a bit of expertise, whether it's shooting the video or recording the audiobook or placing an interview. We talk about how we don't ask authors to design their book covers so we want to be full service in terms of marketing and publicity and a wide variety of business models and formats. Our job is to promote any idea that the author has. So these are a variety of ways that we're doing it.

KENNEALLY: And your own background, your own professional background is interesting because you came to Harper not from the world of what you told me was bound books. And I found that an interesting phrase, books unbound – but also books unbundled or the unbundling of the content, if you will.

ALLESSI: Right. I'm not a traditional publishing person. I started at Harper six years ago in the audio department as an editor and I've never had a book job. I love authors. I love books obviously but I also – I really do believe that there are a variety of ways that an author can get his or her idea to the world. And I'm very excited to be part of that effort to get the idea to the world in any format that is successful in reaching people.

KENNEALLY: Well here at Book Expo there's been a great deal of attention to the e-book and the Kindle and so forth. And the response, it was interesting to me – the most interesting response was somebody, a man who often has his eye on the future, Steve –

BREAK IN FILE

ALLESSI: – by saying I don't really believe what Steve Jobs says publicly and I think that it in fact encouraged me that it's more likely that he's working on a delivery system for book interiors than ever before and I have a little – so I'm very skeptical.

KENNEALLY: Well I think the future of books is tied up in the past and I just have to share a short story. I met recently a publisher of Latin and Greek textbooks. And so I asked him what's new in dead languages these days. And what he told me was they were doing a podcast series of Cicero and Caesar and so forth and the pod –

ALLESSI: That's fantastic.

KENNEALLY: Yeah. And the podcast series is called "I, Podius" which I thought was terrific.

ALLESSI: You got to love that. That's fantastic. It's anything that we can do to put the words and the ideas in front of potential consumers I think is a good effort and I think that I'm encouraged as well. I think people are going to read. I think they're going to read in different ways and I do think that reading bound books is likely to diminish and probably reading long formats is likely to diminish but I'm not – I don't think it's going to diminish hugely and I'm not discouraged that ideas are going to suffer. In fact I think ideas will probably gain in currency as we have more opportunity to run into them.

KENNEALLY: Well we're going to start thinking this is all just a group hug but I'm glad to hear it because we certainly know that the future of the newspaper seems to be very much in doubt and printed forms of all kinds really are under threat. But there is a sense that the book is an object that will survive all of this. Thank you very much, Ana Maria.

ALLESSI: Thank you.

KENNEALLY: I'd like to turn now to Deborah Kovacs. Welcome, Deborah.

KOVACS: Thanks.

KENNEALLY: Deborah is senior vice president of publishing at Walden Media, a film studio specializing in the adaptation of children's classics. You may already have seen some of their movies, I rather think you have. They include *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Prince Caspian*, *Holes*, *Because of Winn-Dixie* and *The Bridge to Terabithia*. Debbie has overseen their publishing activities since joining Walden in 2001 and was instrumental in the formation in 2005 of a publishing joint venture with Penguin. They've adapted more than 20 original works and that includes the newly-published book *Savvy* by Ingrid Law. And most recently Debbie was central to the establishment of Walden Pond Press, a new imprint to be

housed at HarperCollins. So welcome again, Debbie. And tell me about Walden's view of the book. Clearly we know it as a film company but you see it in a different way.

KOVACS: Yeah the movie is a ruse to get children to read. This is a literacy company. We happen to make movies.

KENNEALLY: So your sense of content, then, goes beyond the film itself.

KOVACS: Absolutely. Over the last seven years since the company was founded I think we've given away probably 500,000 books based on our movies because yes it promotes the movie but in our opinion, if the kids don't read the book they're missing – we're all missing the point. And all of us at the company are avid, avid readers, believe in story, believe in the importance to kids – incredible importance to kids – of having the story experience and what Paul is describing as the opportunity to form the images in their own mind. Admittedly we do add those images but, honest and true, it is done as an afterword, past – we really, really prefer having the kids having read the books first because it's just – we think it's fun to show them what we did with what they might have imagined, but we would love them to come into it with their own pictures first.

KENNEALLY: Well the reason I wanted you to join us today was because if reading has a future, it has to have future readers and so what you're involved with, your goal here, is to create those future readers and to build an appetite, it seems to me. Does the book itself matter, though, the book as object? How do children today respond to the book as object?

KOVACS: Well I have an anecdotal example based on this book *Savvy* that Chris just mentioned, which I hope all of you have a chance to read it. It's an absolutely fantastic book. But one of the things I like about it the best – I won't go into it too much here but it's a coming-of-age story about a girl who's 12 who's about to turn 13. And when Penguin designed the book they decided to make it a certain kind of compact shape. It's not a normal shape. It's wider and shorter. There it is thank you. That's wider and shorter. And the first time I sat with a group of kids who had read it and talked to them about it, it was the most – I'll never forget it because they were all at a very awkward stage physically and they all had the book tucked under their arm. It fit exactly under their arm.

So the book was a story but it was an object, it was a transference object of a sort that was – clearly they just wanted it right there. They wanted it next to their heart, I guess you could say. Because it's something about the experience that that writer had granted them had become part of them. And to me that's what it's all about. Wherever you find your stories. And I happen to start and finish with books myself but I think it's fine if a film opens minds up too and brings the kids back to the book, that's fine.

KENNEALLY: And perhaps you should tell people a bit more about what Walden is trying to do to reach the influencers in these children's lives. And tell us, too, how the influencers – and thinking parents, teachers, and you can tell us who else.

KOVACS: And librarians.

KENNEALLY: And librarians.

KOVACS: Booksellers.

KENNEALLY: And booksellers. How do they respond? There's such a flood of news that, to Paul's earlier point, points to other media. Do people wonder? Do they ever say to you well gee I don't think kids want books?

KOVACS: I never hear that. We talk the most to teachers and librarians and parents and I have never talked to one who said that, ever. I think they are grateful for anything that can draw the kids back to reading. I think all of us recognize the responsibility that we have to the development of kids' minds by ensuring that they're readers. Because I think that they need that focus and that concentration. They need to use those – they need to do the mental gymnastics that you do when you're reading and when you're following a story in your imagination. It's just extremely important to their development and to their growth and to their future as humans.

KENNEALLY: Well you're also a children's book author, we should say, and working in film I wonder whether that medium has had an impact on your own writing. Or perhaps in reverse, are you and others at Walden who may be more with a planted in the word rather than the image having an influence on how Walden films turn out?

KOVACS: We are a very collaborative group. We communicate a lot. I think that those of us that are on the book side of the company take on the martinet-like role of we really are strong defenders – when we've chosen to adapt a book we try very hard. It doesn't always work, though because it's a very large and complicated process with many, many, many, many players. But we try extremely hard to be advocates for the original message of the author, which doesn't mean a literal interpretation but it does mean respect for and reverence for the original intent because why adapt somebody's work if you don't revere it? So we – and we often work very collaboratively to find ways to make sure that the arc of the meaning that was in the original story makes it all the way through, if possible. It does not always happen but that's definitely one of the gifts we have in our environment, because we do have that kind of discussion at the stages where the scripts are being developed.

KENNEALLY: Well Hemingway said something interesting about his relationship with Hollywood and the films that were made from his books. He said he thought of it as basically he would drive up to the border of California, throw his manuscript over. If anyone threw money back then he just drove away with the money.

KOVACS: He was a smart man.

KENNEALLY: Indeed. But Walden is it seems to me intentionally bifurcated. You've got the publishing side on the East Coast, not far from Boston. And obviously making movies here in Hollywood.

KOVACS: But we are also in some instances acquiring books which we are then developing into films. And so the relationship – and I think that's probably unusual in that our relationship on some projects now and moving into the future starts at the manuscript stage and it starts with a relationship of trust and understanding with the author from the beginning and hopefully that – we're still at the early stages of that – but hopefully that will be a hallmark for us moving forward. To just really – if we've chosen a story to bring forward in print and then in film we hope to find the best ways to sustain the message of it throughout the process.

KENNEALLY: Well we'll be watching and reading, I suppose, right? Well thank you very much, Debbie Kovacs. I want to turn finally to our last guest Irene McDermott. Comes to us from the world of libraries and will tell us a bit about whether libraries are museums or not – museums for books. She gains insights about the Web and the world of publishing from what she tells me is her daily frontline experience as a reference librarian at the Crowell public library in San Marino, California, not so far away from here. She writes about these discoveries in a column, *Internet Express*, which has appeared monthly in *Searcher* magazine and recently published the second edition of her book *The Librarian's Internet Survival Guide* from Information Today. She speaks often to meetings of fellow librarians and indeed has addressed the Library of Congress as part of their Luminary lecture series. Welcome, Irene McDermott.

MCDERMOTT: Thanks Chris. I'm delighted to be here.

KENNEALLY: Well it's good to have you here and I thought it was important to enjoin the conversation with you because libraries are often where at least as children we first discover this world of books and perhaps because libraries are almost warehouses of a sort of books that can be an overwhelming experience rather like BEA. But in a world where we've got all these media distractions, are libraries at all in danger of becoming museums of books or – I would hope not, but mortuaries of books?

MCDERMOTT: Well in fact the exact opposite has occurred, Chris. Since the advent of the Internet about 13 years ago, across the nation circulation and use of libraries has gone up at least 50 to 60%. It's fantastic. People come in, they use our books, they use our Internet. We have wonderful book clubs, as has been mentioned. The Oprah books bring in people. And that's just the adults. We're coconspirators is what we are, with publishers, to help children really develop their brains to be able to read the technology that is books.

KENNEALLY: And you said something to me as we prepared for our conversation that struck me as interesting. I know that the library is a place where I've done research for my books and it's the first image that comes to me, the repository of knowledge. But librarians have for a long time seen their role as connecting people to entertainment as well.

MCDERMOTT: Absolutely. Since about the turn of the last century, libraries have – public libraries have taken on the dual role of having information for practical use in the world and also being an outlet for entertainment such as fiction – fiction books that people read.

KENNEALLY: But it's beyond the form factor, which it's not simply the book itself.

MCDERMOTT: Absolutely. A book can be considered a technology, a codex technology which has its roots, really, about 2,000 years ago when we turned from scrolls to actually having a book where you could turn the pages. So that is one form of technology that we offer our books in. Another is large-print books. And a very popular format is books on tape or CD or MP3 player. Lots of commuting, lots of listening – we consider that reading.

KENNEALLY: Well I was going to ask you about that. If people are coming to the library to use their computers and so forth – they're reading, but they're not reading books? They don't end up taking out books? Or you say they do?

MCDERMOTT: They actually do. Once they're in there they're right next to them, so why not? So they do take them, too. The more you take out, the freer they get.

KENNEALLY: And what about the role that librarians have? Librarians don't take courses in marketing themselves, I can't imagine. They take courses in the Dewey Decimal System. And so they learn how to organize the works. But they may not actually be taught or be thinking about how to promote the work. True or not?

MCDERMOTT: Yes that is a failing of librarians and we've realized that. We're literally among ourselves taking marketing classes, how to push more information out. We're trying to develop podcasts ourselves. So we have authors come to speak and we push those out.

KENNEALLY: Accepted that change.

MCDERMOTT: Well we accepted that change with a change in architecture. We just had at – our library just opened in January. And it features what modern public libraries have, acknowledging its dual role with two constituencies that just don't get along. One constituency is our traditional constituency of older readers who like it to be quiet. Another is the after school kids crowd. And these kids are really studying. But they get together in a group and they talk to each other. We've

actually developed a system. The library is divided in two and over in one corner is our study area where the kids go after school. The other is the adult area. We make sure they separate out when they come in. And then it's not a problem anymore.

KENNEALLY: What about cell phones? Wireless PCs, that's great because people can bring in their own computer, they don't have to just access yours, do the research. But cell phones and texting and all the other things that, at least to cranks like myself seems annoying, does that have a place in the library?

MCDERMOTT: Well we have started just now allowing some cell phone use in the library but we do ask if people are talking loudly that they go outside. Texting is silent. We wish you'd text. Text.

KENNEALLY: And that's writing itself so it's reading so maybe it's going to help them read.

MCDERMOTT: Right. It's writing and reading.

KENNEALLY: I suppose so. And are librarians moving forward with this, too? You go to Old Navy and you see them walking around on the floor with the wireless microphones telling each other what's what. If somebody's looking for a book do you get that assistance in the new library?

MCDERMOTT: Well we're really hoping to move towards that. Lots of libraries are. So they're constantly connected that they can answer – we can answer telephone questions and questions from the circulation desk and all these at the same time. So yes that's a movement.

KENNEALLY: But finally, how do you respond to this age of abundance when it comes to books? 277,000 titles published last year. You can't possibly acquire all of them. And then there's the additional works of nontraditional publishing. The role of the librarian as another form of gatekeeper – how difficult is it and especially when people divide themselves now into so many separate constituencies – you really have to have a book there for everyone, don't you?

MCDERMOTT: Absolutely. Of course not all libraries are the same and there's not really a perception of that outside but there's academic libraries, just like there's different stores. They're car parts stores and then there's Wal-Mart. You don't go to Old Navy to get a car part. In that way libraries are different from each other. Our library happens to be a shallow new collection because we have a restricted area to store books. So a lot of times some of our older books that don't circulate, we allow those to go out to our bookstore. So you just have to decide what kind of library you are. Are you a new library or are you an archival library?

KENNEALLY: And any words of wisdom, if you will, from the library's reference desk for publishers as far as your relationship with them?

MCDERMOTT: Well we are your biggest advocates. We shop. We love to shop and buy things from you. So anything you can do to help guide us is just wonderful.

KENNEALLY: So things like access to Internet author – or interviews with authors and so forth would certainly be helpful to you as well?

MCDERMOTT: Yes and we also like authors to come to our library and speak. Those events are very, very popular.

KENNEALLY: Well thank you all. Thank you Paul Dry, Ana Maria Alessi, Deborah Kovacs and Irene McDermott for joining us today.

MCDERMOTT: Thanks Chris.

KENNEALLY: And I would like now to open it up to questions from the audience. Anyone here want to take a stab at arguing about the future of reading, telling us that books perhaps don't have a future or maybe sharing with us an example of the direction you think the future will take for publishing? I see a hand there.

F: Yes I have a question for the young lady from HarperCollins. I've been in a book club for 25 years and when we started, everyone read (inaudible) copy but as time has gone some of us now do CD. The most challenging thing when you are listening to a book – if you listen to the book, it's harder to participate in the discussion afterward because you cannot, as you're listening to it you can't mark what you want to bring to the group when it's time for the discussion. So I wanted to know because with everything you said, I hear technology (inaudible) different format as long as you get the author to put it in front of the reader, in whatever format. So how do you combat that? (inaudible) do something with CDs or something?

KENNEALLY: And can I just for the sake of those who may not have heard the question, my sense of your question is that the frustrating aspect of audiobooks for you is that you can't write notes in the margin.

F: Right. And you can't tag those areas that are going to be significant during the monthly book discussion.

KENNEALLY: So it's about tagging or it's putting a little leaf in the side of the book so you can turn to that page quickly. Is there search technology for audiobooks that's improving in that regard?

ALLESSI: It is improving and I would just point out one improvement that's already taken place which is we are now publishing more and more titles unabridged so at

least you have a wider selection to find if your book group is reading something, you're not going to be stuck with an abridgment that would do you no good at all. So at least there's that, right?

F: Let me say this to you. I never listen to an abridge (inaudible).

ALLESSI: And you have a lot of company now. The marketplace has moved, has migrated almost entirely to unabridged. So that's a start. And it is trickier. That's probably the trickiest format to notate because with e-books and other things, like if you read on your Kindle now you can fold the page down, you can make annotations. They save your annotations to a site. You can have them on e-mail. So e-books is a little bit more flexible and I think that audiobooks will get there. But it's not as close as probably you would like. So for you I would recommend seriously looking into an e-reader. You can get your books inexpensively and you can absolutely annotate them. But if you listen I think you're just going to have to try to jot it down. I don't know.

F: The way that I have managed it, and I am a librarian, I usually have the hard copy right along with the CD. So I actually it's more work for me but I go back and mark like that and I also keep a running list of the characters as they are introduced on the CD.

ALLESSI: It's amazing. Most book clubs, I think they get there, they pour the wine. They just start talking. You have a really industrious book club and you're, I'm sure, a valued member if you're taking that many conscientious notes.

KENNEALLY: Can I just draw Paul in because the advocate for the form factor of the printed book. And the thing that strikes me that the digitized book, whatever form that digitization takes, is that it's very hard to capture a page – you say the Kindle attempts to do that. But yet the book remains a terrific vehicle for rereading. Not just reading the first time but for rereading.

DRY: You mean you've left your footprints on the book and like the girls who came with their book. Yes but I suppose technology is going to let people annotate. I'm fascinated by listening to a book because really that's the – the Homeric epics were listened to. They weren't read. It's a great way to take a book in. And I'm sensitive to the problem of annotating but in this world you don't get everything all at once. I had an experience – I had never finished *Lolita*. I don't know why it was. And I listened to it on a drive and I couldn't believe how much fun it was.

ALLESSI: Was that the Jeremy Irons recording?

DRY: Yeah the Jeremy Irons. And then I went and read the book as well. I don't – I'm not put off by the technology at all. Things change. The question is whether you get drawn away from certain essential experiences, which is the encounter with the words that somebody worked hard to elaborate one after another. And that's what I

mean about skipping, surfing is you – and I'm susceptible to this. Maybe that's why I'm critical of it. It's like too much caffeine. You're always skipping from one point to another. I think listening is a great way to take in a book. And I don't see the problem with electronic books. I don't have a Kindle. I went to buy one just to see what it was like and they said it was a two-week wait and I said I need it right this minute.

(overlapping conversations; inaudible)

ALLESSI: They're back in stock.

KENNEALLY: That's the condition of living in the age of distraction. Are there other questions from the floor at all? Yes.

F: I was just wondering where talking about the future of reading if anybody could address what the industry itself is doing to nurture new readers and are you going into schools. I just read something in February in the educators learners magazine that said a lot of the teachers that started incorporating making book (inaudible) actually in middle schools and high schools and how that has encouraged a lot of kids who are struggling reading to encourage them to actually go through and read a book and discuss a book. And there's this new technology out there that's exciting to younger people and there's this potential to reach out to them. Is anybody addressing that? Is anybody actively trying to reach out to them?

KENNEALLY: Debbie can I ask you to respond to that? And I wonder whether you do that at all, not simply to encourage the young readers to go to the books but to maybe create their own films or do something like that?

KOVACS: We don't do too much of that up until now.

KENNEALLY: You think it's a good idea?

KOVACS: Anything that gets kids excited about reading is a good idea. I think that we do a lot of stuff to help kids taste a book. With *Savvy* we sent out the first chapter as a PDF and as an audio book and have used it as a way of seeding a conversation. A couple months before the book came out we were trying to get kids to read it and talk about it and we made the author available to them just to see it as a conversation. We haven't actually put them to the task of making movies yet but we have done over the years many, many, many types of projects that are designed to engage kids with the excitement of the story itself. Yes.

KENNEALLY: What about in libraries, Irene? Are there activities you do with the children that might be along those lines?

MCDERMOTT: Well absolutely. One of our most popular programs is called the summer reading program where children read five books and they come to report to

a teenager. They tell them the plots of the books and then they get a pencil. And then the next time they get a little Baskin-Robbins certificate. They get so excited and they read all summer. And we say I'm sorry you read 20 books but we don't have more prizes for you. But they keep bringing them in. So it's very, very thrilling. It's really one of the best things we do.

KENNEALLY: And the notion there is that they want to share their interpretation of the book and their response to the book.

MCDERMOTT: Absolutely. And they also want a certificate for ice cream.

KENNEALLY: Don't we all. A question there please. Yes.

M: It seems to me that the discussion so far is focused on fiction rather than nonfiction. Now from fiction it makes a lot of sense because fiction is basically a narrative and it's single-dimensional in the sense that it's a story, right? And audiobooks make a lot of sense with fiction. But with nonfiction audiobooks don't make as much sense. (inaudible) in particular if they're going for information rather than a narrative, they'll just go on the Internet. And it's more of a cafeteria style.

ALLESSI: So we need to put them – we need to put those authors' works on the Internet, perhaps in chapters. Perhaps letting them select in order, the beginning, middle and end, mix them up in ways that the author might not have originally thought of but has approved with absolute approval. But I agree with you. Although I do think that listening to nonfiction is a very similar experience to listening to fiction, whether – as long as it's unabridged.

KENNEALLY: Well if I could say I was engaged as a young boy by books about astronomy and I can imagine those could be made to be very exciting in non-book format.

ALLESSI: Yes.

M: Do you think there is much of a future for that? It seems to me that (overlapping conversations; inaudible).

ALLESSI: I think that is the future. I think that we're going to learn more and more how to share ideas, getting away from a long-form bound book constraint. And that actually opens up tremendous opportunity. And there will always be the bound book and it will always be pushed together but unbundling the book is the wave of the future and it's going to introduce people to a lot more ideas, in my opinion. If we do it right. And then they can always go and read the whole thing in sequence or they can move onto a deeper level in pieces or whatever.

KOVACS: I want to add one comment, which goes back to what Paul was saying about *War and Peace* because I am actually – I missed it at 16, I missed it at 25. I'm actually right –

DRY: And now at 35.

(overlapping conversations; inaudible)

KOVACS: I'm actually right this minute reading it. But I'm reading it on librivox.org, listening. I don't know if you're familiar with librivox.org. It's an incredibly wonderful collaborative community experiment. I apologize because I realize this – but –

MCDERMOTT: That's PD, don't worry about it.

KOVACS: I know. Exactly. It's a public domain free download and it's volunteers reading a chapter at a time with a wide variety of accents, abilities and pronunciations. Absolutely completely democratic. And it's so – I go

F: (inaudible).

KOVACS: – either look in a book or look up something because I don't understand that campaign. They're telling me the story, I don't understand the story. And that's fiction but it's coming, all these other things are – besides the fact that there's all these different voices but –

KENNEALLY: And not only that but all those names. I mean my God if you're taking on the challenge of reading *War and Peace* you're taking on the challenge of reading all those Russian names.

KOVACS: But I agree with Paul. It's not a challenge. Once you start getting into it it's just a fabulous story by one of the world's greatest writers. It just happens to be daunting. It looks big on the shelf. It sounds like it's going to be I'll never get through this. And then once you get the context, you're right there. He's such a fabulous writer. But it's also a way of learning about history and so forth.

DRY: I would like to comment on the nonfiction question. Look the author and the editor and the publisher decided this chapter, this chapter and this chapter is going in the biography of Winston Churchill. Well when you buy a book you decide I'm skipping this, I'm going to read that. But somebody applied mind and thought and said this is the book I'm making. We've always been free to say the hell with what you made I'm going to read it my way. On the other hand, it's interesting to say well why did they author put this in in the order he put it in? That's the encounter with the author. And I think that's valid in fiction and nonfiction. So of course we can skip. But that begs the question, why did he do it the way he did it? The great

biographies, these huge biographies, and they got bigger with the advent of word processing. All these –

F: As has everything.

DRY: Yeah all these books got bigger rather than ripped up and unbounded. It's fair to – you have the encounter with the author and the author's encounter with the figure. I guess Wikipedia made its – filled out its shelf but putting online all of the 14th – no the 11th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Of course knowledge has always been cut up different ways.

KENNEALLY: And to the point, Paul, of nonfiction – biography has the virtue, though, of a narrative if you will. There's a life with a beginning and middle and end however you tell it. So that would certainly be an attractive place for nonfiction work to go into these new forms. Another question please. Yes?

M: I have to admit I'm a skeptic. I have been reading for (inaudible) 45 years. And I have come into the habits (inaudible) of skimming. I took Stephen Colbert's *I Am America* to lunch and 64 pages later I got the idea and I was done and (inaudible) to the library. So I (inaudible). What has made me not skeptical is going to streaming video (inaudible) like (inaudible) TV (inaudible) seeing interviews with (inaudible) and Al Sharpton. And watching them duke it out.

ALLESSI: Together in the same room?

M: That made me want to read (inaudible).

F: That's fantastic.

M: Then watching a movie like *Running with Scissors* and then realizing Augusten Burroughs, this was a true – basically a true story. I've read his entire work. And his brother's. And about autism. So it helps I think these days if there is some kind of connection for people to have a connection back to something (inaudible).

DRY: I think that the librarian stands in the center of this as the example of the lover of the book in the interest of the reader. And in no one else's interest. I'm a lover of the book but I'm also selling the book. And it's reasonable for somebody to say well sure, you're pitching that book. But I think the librarian – or people who stand in that role, a friend, they're the ones who are saying read this, it's good for you. You're going to have fun. You're going to love it. You're going to be deepened. So that role, it seems to me, is the critical one. Every book that succeeds acquires hundreds of friends who speak on its behalf for the sheer pleasure of it and to be friendly to someone else.

MCDERMOTT: And if I may speak as a librarian, I find the information that I look for on the Internet to be different than the information I would find when I read a book

for pleasure. If I'm doing a report about George Washington, maybe I just do want to know when he was born and when he died. This is information that is easily found on the Internet and that's a very easy way to get it. Human beings are – we're sort of lazy and we're irrational so if we want to just get it we get it. But then if we want to read for pleasure, we'll read the whole book.

KENNEALLY: And I think that gets back to the original discussion about children and reading. Reading in many children becomes a kind of obsession, if not the book itself, a certain subject matter they have to absolutely devour. So it seems to me what I think I heard Clay Shirky say at another program yesterday is that you're in search of people who are passionate readers and that all of us, whether we're publishers or authors or librarians, have to identify the passion in ourselves and then hope there will be others who share that same passion. I think there must be a roomful of passionate people here because you've hung on for the hour on this discussion and so I really very much appreciate that. I saw a hand so we'll have one last question?

F: I just wanted to comment on (inaudible).

KENNEALLY: I'll repeat the question for those in the back and it was a moment where all of us said ah. It was the missing link there, the future of book retailing and what might be in store for the future of book retailing. Anyone want to take that? Wisely decided not to. Paul.

DRY: Is this still on?

KENNEALLY: Yes of course.

DRY: It seems to me the problem is that Amazon is the gorilla in the room, that it's too easy for all of us to get the book. Some of you may remember the *Common Reader* which was a wonderful book catalog and he – Jim Mustich had a gift for a synopsis of a book, a true gift. And he sent out 50,000 – or whatever he sent out – eight times a year. People would read the synopses and then go to Amazon. So how does the bookstore compete with that? You may be a friend to your customers. How do you get them to shop there? One problem is your cost. You've got that inventory sitting there. It seems to me the bookstores that have succeeded are physically inviting, the ambience is a place where your customer wants to be. You probably have to cut the price a bit as a kind of sought. Well we're not 35% off but you join this club, you can get a discount. And you have to always be uncovering things and educating yourselves so you can educate the readers, your potential customers. But I think it's a very hard game. I think Barnes & Noble is finding it's a hard game, too. And that speaks to the physical, the book versus the – it's an object that has to be someplace. And if you don't have it, you don't have the customer.

KOVACS: Do you find that in your bookstore, efforts to connect with the community are productive, are helpful to you in terms of traffic? Or events?

F: They are. (inaudible). I was just talking about (inaudible) publisher (inaudible). But our (inaudible) looking at (inaudible) screens in the store where you can (inaudible) it is (inaudible) it does actually sell more books and we're not sure as we haven't seen the statistics to refute that it does. And we had had some (inaudible) in the past (inaudible) community-based (inaudible) things like that (inaudible).

KENNEALLY: Well it certainly points out that the future of books is tied up with the commerce of books and it'll be a question I'm sure we'll return to at another Book Expo next year. Thank you all again for joining us. Paul Dry, Ana Maria Alessi, Debbie Kovacs and Irene McDermott. My name is Chris Kenneally. Thank you for joining us.

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