



FLORRIE BINFORD KICHLER

Q: Welcome to another edition of *Beyond the Book*. My name is Chris Kenneally. I'm the director of author relations for the not for profit Copyright Clearance Center, coming to you today from Los Angeles where we are joining PMA for it's annual publishing university program. And joining me is Florrie Binford Kichler. Welcome Florrie.

A: Thank you, Chris. It's a pleasure to be here.

Q: And a pleasure to have you, Florrie. In 1999 Florrie founded Patria Press Incorporated, publisher of the Young Patriot Series of historical fiction for young readers. She is currently president of PMA, and had previously served on the board for four years. She is a member of the Children's Book Council and the Book Industry Study Group Board. She also serves on the boards of the Indiana University Women's MBA advisory group and the ACLU of Indiana. She earned BA and MBA degrees from Indiana University and is an alumna of the Stanford Professional Publishing course. She lives in Indianapolis, Indiana. There's a number of things I'd like to chat with you about briefly. But I believe this is some news for PMA. Tell us about that.

A: We do have some news. After 25 years, we are changing our name from PMA to The Independent Book Publishers Association. Acronym IBPA.

Q: Now that will mean lots of new things. A new website, a new web address. Why don't we tell people about that, but does this indicate a new direction for IBPA or a recognition of some changes over the last 25 years? Tell us about that.

A: Absolutely. Fifteen publishers 25 years ago started our association as the Publishers Marketing Association to help publishers market their books. In the past 25 years, not only have we progressed to over 65 marketing programs, but we've expanded our mission to include education and also advocacy. So the new name really reflects more exactly who we are. We are the voice of independent publishers.

Q: When you say advocacy, what sort of advocacy are you thinking about? And I wonder if you can tell us, I believe there's a court case in Indiana that you may be involved with personally, since you're on the ACLU. So tell us first of all what

advocacy means to IBPA – we won't say PMA anymore – and also what it might mean for you there in Indiana.

A: Advocacy, as we are carrying forth our mission and our association, is to basically defend publishers' rights in the industry. And that can range from everything to a wholesaler taking advantage of returns and returning them loose in a box and being damaged, to recent – we recently spoke out against Amazon.com requiring print-on-demand publishers to use their book search exclusively. So it can range. Advocacy can take a lot of different directions and we are very cognizant of our role in representing our 4,000 members and really the whole independent publishing industry and beyond in making sure that we do keep up on what's going on and can defend our publishers when needed against what we foresee as problems against them.

Q: And indeed, there is a court case in Indiana too, is there not, involving some legislation that's fairly controversial for book sellers and presumably for book publishers.

A: Yes, there is. I don't know all the details, but it does have to do with book sellers selling content that is perceived as being sexually explicit. However, there is really no definition of that. So it can encompass everything from *Catcher in the Rye* and some other classics like *To Kill a Mockingbird* on up. And the ACLU of Indiana is involved in that court case along with the Media Coalition.

Q: And that case is currently in court. Well, the thing about having a voice like IBPA, of course, is it's a collective voice, able to gather up all the small publishers, the independent publishers. And I guess small these days – we can't really use that word. It's kind of like you never talk about a B-movie anymore, it's all about independent film. We don't want to talk about small publishers, we want to talk about independent publishers. But that sector has been growing in importance and in strength in recent years. Tell us about that.

A: Yes, it has. And I think there's a lot of reasons for that. I think there's a movement in general towards the independent sector. Not just publishing, but book selling and hometown businesses. The green movement. I think it's all sort of a way to honor those who are not at the mercy of a huge conglomerate. Our members, we own our own businesses. We work in our own businesses and we're very proud of that.

Q: And you are a member of the board of the Book Industry Study Group. Michael Healy is going to be speaking here later on today. And I know that a few years ago, they published a report, "Under the Radar," which in fact we've discussed it *Beyond the Book*, that documented the importance of this sector of the industry, which up to that point had been overlooked in a lot of the analysis. And now BISG is following it fairly closely. Are there some numbers that you can tell us about, as far as BISG? I believe Michael told me it's a third of the industry is in the category

of under \$5 million a year. Now \$5 million a year sounds like a lot of money, but there's quite a number, it's that whole long tail thing. Right?

A: Absolutely and I think it was a big surprise when that report was first published to find out exactly how much of the industry was dependent upon the independent sector. And a lot of that was not known before, because we don't tend to use the bookstore as our primary market. We sell lots and lots of books in lots of different places. And that for the first time was finally taken into account. And I think it really surprised everybody, particularly the larger guys.

Q: Well, when you say that, not in bookstores, give us an example that people who might not understand that. Maybe some gift shops, but what are some of the other venues that independent book sellers sell into?

A: Well we encourage our publishers to find those alternative markets and it can be anything from an association, who may buy books to give away. There's a bank who'll buy books to give away. There's really no limit. We always tell our publishers there's no limit, except your imagination. If you have a dog book, for example. There's the humane society. There's the American Kennel Club. There's a pet food store. There's PETCO. There's – all you have to do is just sit and brainstorm for ten minutes and you can probably find 30 ways to sell that pet book. And that's what we encourage our publishers to do, because of course that's the best way they can make money.

Q: Right. And the Internet, obviously, is making that much more possible, much more quickly for a lot of people. The cost of getting up and running, if you have a book idea, have dropped significantly.

A: Absolutely and it has leveled the playing field, and that has been really, really good for our publishers, because there are now ways that they can compete directly with the big guys on a very level playing field and very cost-effectively. And that's what the Internet has done for us.

Q: And there'll be an awards ceremony tomorrow. The annual Benjamin Franklin Awards. We're not at liberty right now to say who's going to do the winning. But who's won in the past? When we talk about independent publishers, it covers a range, so there'll be some names we might not have heard of, but there'll be many publishers that'll be recognized by people. Just give us a few examples of who's won in the past.

A: Actually, what's unique about the Benjamin Franklin Awards is although we sponsor them, we do not limit them to only independent publishers. And as a result, we have had winners from Workman, we've had winners from Wiley. We've had winners from all of the large – Random House – we've had winners from all the large publishers. Right up there with the smallest one book publisher you could ever imagine. The key there is quality. And our former, beloved execute

director, Jan Nathan, always said that she was against limiting those awards, because independent publishers have to compete with everybody on the bookstore shelf. And in order to compete with them then you have to make sure that your standards meet the standards of independent publishing and the big guys. So that is why our Benjamin Franklin Awards are so unique.

And I might add another thing that makes them so unique is that the judges do give direct feedback to every entrant into the awards. So even if you don't win, you can still get an analysis of your book from a judge whose business it is to look at that book and decide what about it is worthy of an award and maybe what about it needs to be improved.

Q: I'm sure that would be helpful. And finally, as someone who publishes books on the patriots and the Revolutionary War figures, Benjamin Franklin is clearly an important figure, but there are some other characters. We talked recently about them. Phyllis Whitney. So from the very beginning of this country, publishing and writing were absolutely important to the intellectual life of the country.

A: Absolutely. And we like to say Benjamin Franklin was probably one of the first independent publishers in this country. So it's very fitting that our awards be named after somebody who was so instrumental and influential in the industry as we know it today.

Q: And I'm also thinking of Phyllis Whitney, whose book was, in fact, a kind of a self-published book, if I recall correctly. It was published by subscription and was the first published – she was the first published African-American poet in the country.

A: Absolutely. That was actually before the country was a country. It was actually before the Declaration of Independence. And Phyllis Wheatley was an amazing, inspirational figure, because she was brought to this country as a slave. Taught herself to read. Wrote amazing poems and ended up meeting George Washington, and had a lot of success in her lifetime. So what an inspirational story for all of us.

Q: Well, it's an inspirational story indeed and so is IBPA. Thank you very much for chatting with me. Florrie Binford Kichler is the president of the former PMA, now the IBPA. Tell us the new website address and again, thank you very much, Florrie.

A: Thank you. It's IBPA-online.org and thanks so much for having me, Chris.

Q: Well, thank you.

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