



Beyond the Book®



REBECCA FOX, MediaBistro.com

KENNEALLY: We're watching the lines blur here between old media and new media as we attend the fifth annual New York Round Table Writers' Conference. This is Chris Kenneally, the host of Beyond the Book and author and creative relations director for the Copyright Clearance Center. Joining me today is Rebecca Fox who is the managing editor of Mediabistro.com, a site you're probably all very familiar with as it provides media professionals with news, insights, information, jobs and analysis on the ever changing media industry. Welcome to Beyond the Book, Rebecca.

FOX: Thanks, Chris. I'm happy to be speaking with you.

KENNEALLY: Well, we're happy to have you and as I mentioned at the top, we're watching the lines blur here. You were just part of a fascinating panel that included an editor from Huffington Post, somebody from About.com, and your own role as managing editor of Media Bistro puts you right in the center of this discussion which is how the old media is kind of crossing that bridge and joining everybody who's in new media. Pretty soon those terms won't mean much anymore but a lot of baggage is getting carried across too and I wondered if we could talk about that briefly. We heard people in this panel talking about some of the old fuddy-duddy stuff, you know, fact checking and confirming stories and sourcing. Is more of that happening now? Do you think that now that people are more watchful of what is published online that they're expecting more of that kind of old world, old media principles and ethics?

FOX: I think that's definitely happening. I myself am very partial to the fuddy-duddy stuff as you referred to it. Fact checking, verification, multiple sourcing and at Mediabistro.com, we make a very concerted effort to be able to back up all the information we publish and I do think that increasingly online writing and publishing is being held to the same standards that print media has previously been held to. So I think you're only going to see more online outlets with a greater focus on all of the things that have given print media so much credibility.

KENNEALLY: Right, and you know we heard – as I say about some of the blurring of lines, there was this old expression in the newsroom in the past about the Chinese wall, the advertising on one side of the business and the editorial on the other side. That was not always entirely a very clear line but that was the theory and freelancing kind of made for a little bit of a danger there sometimes because you never knew if a contributor had been treated to a nice dinner and a trip or whether they hadn't been. How do you do that? How do you get your contributors or how do you think blogging should treat the contribution that comes from so many



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different sources? How can the reader know that the editor really has made sure that the writer hasn't been put in the tank?

FOX: I think that really depends on which outlet you're reading or writing for. I think a lot of different places have a lot of different attitudes on that and again, I do believe that – I think one of the longest standing tenets of journalism in general is the division of editorial from advertising, not having pay for play, and it's something we take very seriously at Mediabistro.com and we aim to do the kind of original reporting and journalism that is held to the same standards that newspaper coverage is held to and as such, we are very cognizant of these concerns and we think about them all the time as we're putting together stories. Now can I tell you everything my reporter did last night? No, but they know us and what we're aiming to do and we strive to work with people who are very clear on our standards and what our expectations are on that level.

KENNEALLY: And one of the things that also came up was a look that Roy Sekoff had, sort of the *LA Times* sportswriter who in print is very much the soul of objectivity and on his blog or her blog, it has less balance and more attitude. Do you think that that is something we can expect to see more of then as print reporters move online? Are they going to be giving up that kind of old world objectivity and replacing it with this more new world attitude?

FOX: I really don't think that it's an either/or situation. I think of it as being more additive. I think that traditional journalists are feeling freer to incorporate voice into the writing and the work that they do and what they publish and I think they're getting increasingly comfortable with sharing those aspects of themselves and they are finding that their readership is eager to know them as people with opinions and particular points of view and I think it's an additive thing more than anything else.

KENNEALLY: Well, I like that idea too. It's not either/or. You don't have to choose. You can have both. It's kind of like you can have dessert and the appetizer at the same time. Finally, I want to ask you about a term that sounded like a contradiction, like almost an oxymoron somebody used. A professional blogger. I thought all bloggers had to be almost by their definition amateurs of some sort. What makes for a professional blogger these days? I mean apart from making income on their AdSense, is there emerging any kind of professional principles that go along with being a professional blogger?

FOX: I think so. At Mediabistro.com we employ dozens of professional bloggers. These are people whose primary job is to write for our weblogs and as such they, like I said, they apply these tenets of journalism and reporting to what it is they do. They are aware that our goal is to break and find media news and they are applying



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reportorial tactics to that endeavor and as such I think a professional blogger is a state of mind. If you operate as a professional, you're a professional.

KENNEALLY: So in other words, journalism is journalism no matter where you find it, whether it's in print or online.

FOX: I think that's true. I think I can read an equally if not more informative restaurant review from a blogger who is very detailed and painstaking in regaling their experience in the same way that I can read Gael Greene expounding on a restaurant in *New York Magazine*.

KENNEALLY: Well, we'll be watching your blogging and all the blogs that come in through Mediabistro.com. We've been speaking with Rebecca Fox, managing editor of Mediabistro.com. Thank you very much, Rebecca.

FOX: Thank you, Chris. It's been a pleasure.

KENNEALLY: And this is Chris Kenneally for Beyond the Book. We hope you join us again for more from the fifth annual New York Round Table Writers' Conference.