



Q: Welcome again to Beyond the Book. My name is Chris Kenneally, Director of Author Relations for the non-profit Copyright Clearance Center. We're in New York for the Publishing Business Conference and Expo.

We're talking today with Margie Ross from Regnery Publishing. Welcome, Margie.

ROSS: Thank you very much, Chris. Nice to be here.

Q: It's lovely to have you, as well. Joining us is Michael Norris from Simba Information. Michael, good to have you on.

NORRIS: Thanks for having me on, Chris.

Q: And what we want to do is continue a conversation we've started, and one I think we're going to pursue further at Beyond the Book. And that is the relationship of publishers and authors as we really get, not only knee deep in the Internet age, but now up our eyeballs, really. And it's changing quite a lot. It's changing the way publishers have to sell to their clients. But it's also how they have to work with their authors.

And Margie, you've got some really important things to say about that, I think. First of all, should publishers be worried about the care and feeding of their authors more than ever?

ROSS: I think publishers should always be worried about the care and feeding of their authors, Chris. And, as you know, Regnery specializes in a particular niche. We do conservative political books. So, we know our authors often very, very well. They're people that are familiar to our audience. And yet, the connection between the author and the audience is something that oftentimes only a publisher can orchestrate.

At the same time, it's always dangerous to assume that a publisher is necessary. And I think one of the questions that we've been talking about is how do publishers remain necessary and not become irrelevant in an age when an author can post something, he can write a blog and put it up online. His readers can read it, and what is a publisher's role in all that?

So, it's – I think it's more important than ever, frankly, for us to not only be clear with ourselves about what value we add. But also view our relationship with authors as a partnership. So, we're working together to try to bring a message to the folks that they're trying to talk to.



Q: And your authors can be, sometimes, household names. And so talk about the connection that a household name author has to you. Compare it to, perhaps somebody who's not quite so well known. Do you have to be more concerned about the famous author going away? Or more concerned about the less well known who can say, well, I'm going to do it on my own?

ROSS: I think we have to be concerned about both, but for different reasons. I think for the celebrity author, the – one of the things that a publisher offers is convenience. A celebrity author probably doesn't have time to worry about all the technical things that a publisher does. And they kind of don't want to be bothered. And that's fine, that's a value that we can provide. A celebrity author doesn't want to – is going to hire someone to handle both his editing and his packaging. But also, publicity and marketing and selling and working relationships with the bookstores.

And so, I think for that reason a celebrity author might value a publisher as a conduit to the bookstores and the marketplace. Whereas a first time author, while they might be very entrepreneurial and might say well, gosh, I can reach that marketplace, I'm blogging all the time on my little website, and I have plenty of readers. But they don't have the ability to make a presentation. They would never get in front of a Barnes & Nobles buyer, or an Amazon buyer. And so they wouldn't have the facility to get their books into the retail environment.

So, I think there are different reasons for an author to need a publisher. But there are also different reasons for a publisher to be worried about an author going away. And I think, again the author – the publisher needs to always recognize what is it that I bring an author? And as I just described, it might be a different thing to a different kind of author.

Q: Is any of this making it's way into the contracts that you have with your authors? For examples, guarantees around certain marketing efforts? Or bring people in for a series of books in order to really guarantee the relationship?

ROSS: That's a really interesting question. I probably have two answers. One is one of the nice things for Regnery is that we have a pretty good reputation for being very, very good at getting lots of publicity and media for our authors. That is our core competency. And so when authors come to us, they know both for good and ill, that they are going to be worked very hard at doing lots of media. And probably we will set up more interviews for an author than any other publisher would do.

Part of that is because of the kind of books we publish. Because we're doing current events books, they lend themselves very well to doing interviews on the radio and TV. And we work very hard to maximize that. So we don't usually have to put in any kind of guarantee in our contracts, because we've built up a pretty



good reputation. And a lot of times authors come to us because they know they're going to get a lot more publicity for their book than they would maybe with some other publisher.

But at the same time, we always have to think, well, what if the author went out and did it themselves? Or what if the author didn't want to do all the media that we set up for them? So, that's a – something that we have to discuss very seriously with an author before we sign them up and make sure that our expectations are in line.

Q: So, again, whether it's contractually obliged on one party or the other, commitment, partnership, these are the really key words.

Michael Norris, I want to turn to you, and go from the specific to the general. What kind of research is Simba doing that corroborates what Margie is saying? And perhaps speak to some of the new technologies, Kindle, for example, and how that may be helping, or not, to disengage authors from publishers.

NORRIS: Well, we're actually seeing through some of the research that we've already done, that publishers are starting to clue into the fact that there is a finite number of books that a person can discover in a year. So you'll actually have been – if you look at the output figures, they've been leveling off or dropping for a lot of the major publishers, because the publishers are pretty much acknowledging that, hey, we actually need to pay attention to each book as they go out. We need to put as much marketing muscle behind this book as we possibly can. And the book absolutely has to be relevant, because it can't possibly crowd out other books, and just going to be lost in the noise. Because it really does speak out against the purpose and the value added publishers. Because the publishers that just release everything they kind of aren't being true to their mission that they need to beware of the content filtering process ends.

And that's really the value add of a publisher these days. In an era where you can get almost any kind of content you want for free, the publishers really represent where the filtering process ends.

Now, in regards to the second part of your question, what I've found is interesting is that there are a lot of contradictions in terms of how technology's actually used to bring books and readers closer together. We've actually done a lot of research with independent and smaller booksellers that will use Google in their stores to help somebody find a book they've heard about in NPR. They use e-newsletters three to one against print newsletters. And they figure out all these online ways of bringing people from one book to the next, because it's something that absolutely needs to be thought about more since most book buyers in America today buy



fewer than five books a year. That's a very, very disengaged group of people. The people who are engaged are the ones who are buying more than ten books. They really know the kinds of books they want. They really know the publishers that they like. And they also seek out the authors that they want to read.

Q: Well, Margie, let me turn back to you. And tell us about the importance of the print book against the eBook, or other forms. How closely are you holding on to the print book? And how ready are you to latch on to eBook?

A: Well, personally, I love printed books (laughter) so I'm holding on to a lot of them in my living room. But I think for a publisher it's important to remember that the real mission of a publisher, as Michael said, is to be the content filter, and to help connect the author with the audience. And whether, ultimately, that content, that message, that insight, that entertainment, that information, whatever's contained in that book, whether, at the end of the day, that's delivered in a printed, bound package, or it's just data bits that are downloaded, I think is less important than remembering the value added that the publisher brings in helping shape the message, and helping work with the author to figure out who the market really is. And then connecting with that market in terms of promoting the book and letting people know it's there.

Michael talked about the number of books, new titles, published. And it's still a staggering number of titles. Something like 250,000, 275,000 new books every year. In that kind of environment, the internet can be a positive force, but it also can be a negative force, just because there's too much data, too much information, too many choices to even know where to begin. I think one of the other things a publisher can do is help talk to, and build a rapport with their target market, and then help that market find the books that they like. Because people do usually buy the same kinds of books. They tend to favor the same kinds of authors.

And if a publisher can develop a brand, which we were talking about in an early session today, so few publishers really have a brand identity. But I think Regnery does, in terms of people know we do conservative political books. If that's what they're looking for, they can come to us, and they know what they'll find. And in fact, when they find a Regnery book on the shelf in a bookstore, they see Regnery on the spine, it means something to them. So, for our target market, that can help an author reach out to an audience that may not recognize the author's name, but may recognize the marketplace in which we tend to thrive.

Q: Well, we're here at Publishing Business Conference and Expo, and definitely the whole idea of a brand is one people have struggled with for so long. And how much does the audience actually look at the spine. But you are one of the lucky exceptions where they can do that, and feel good about it.



Michael, to you on this question of the brand for publishers. Does your research show any directions that someone listening to this program might want to pursue?

NORRIS: Well, absolutely, because we've compiled together information on the children's market, we've compiled together information on the adult trade. And it's actually interesting how many lessons and micro lessons have kind of fallen out of *Harry Potter* books. And even Stephanie Meyer books, because if you have one book that is really popular, and really connects to a reader, there's really nothing else for a publisher to do. They say, well, what's another way that we can actually keep this relationship going? Because once they finish a book, it's completely up to the reader whether or not they're going to buy or purchase another one. So, if – and quite often I hear from publishers that will tell me directly that when they talk to an author who had that as a concept, that they are in favor of, they will actually talk about making a series right out of the gate. And actually making it into a brand, instead of just one single title.

So, one book will become multiple books, or even multiple books will become even more books. Because you saw that happen with Random House, which pushed out Christopher Paolini's *Inheritance Trilogy*, to a cycle, which has four books. And also, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, became just a complete break out hit, and that just like spawned more titles beyond that.

So, there are publishers that are paying attention to that. But it's also part of the reason that the number of books published is actually heading downward. And that's actually a good thing, because there needs to be fewer – consumers don't necessarily need endless choices. They need a choice of just a few things done really, really well. And hopefully if a publisher just has a handful of really good series that consumers are going to find something that they want.

Q: Well, thank you both. We don't want to end up, I don't think, in a world where there are more books than readers. (laughter). There has to be readers chasing books than the other way around. Joining me today for *Beyond the Book*, Margie Ross of Regnery Publishing, and Michael Norris from Simba Information. Margie, thanks so much for being on the program.

ROSS: Thank you. It was a lot of fun.

Q: And likewise, Michael, nice to see you again.

NORRIS: Thanks. Thanks.



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Q: This is Chris Kenneally for Beyond the Book, and we hope you'll join us again.
From the Media Room at Publishing Business Expo. Thanks for listening.

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