



Beyond the Book[®]



KENNEALLY:

Welcome to *Beyond the Book*. My name is Chris Kenneally. I'm the Director of Author Relations for the non-profit Copyright Clearance Center, and very happy to be with Leah Schnelbach, who is the Interim Director of the New York Center for Independent Publishing. Welcome to *Beyond the Book*, Leah.

SCHNELBACH: Thank you. It's nice to be here.

KENNEALLY: Well, it's nice to have you. And we're going to give a little bit of a preview for what is now the fifth annual New York Roundtable Writers' Conference, coming up the weekend of the 24th and 25th of April. It's a program that covers the gamut from the birth of the book, to what happens once you're published. And maybe you want to draw out a few highlights and give people a sense of what they might find waiting for them if they came to the Center.

SCHNELBACH: OK. Well, basically, the plan for the conference, as every year, is that we focus on the business side of the writing life. We try to guide writers through the process of finding an agent, working with an editor, their role in the publicity and marketing of their book, their – the use of the Internet to promote their book, all these sorts of things that are sort of 21st century writer's problems, I think.

So yeah, basically we do the *Birth of the Book* panel, is one of my favorites. That is where we get an author who has recently published or is about to publish their – probably, usually, their first book – not always – and we get their – an editor, an agent, a publicist, and then anyone else that was really closely involved in the book, to talk about sort of the whole process after – the idea is that they finish the book, and then, what happens next? How was the book sold to the agent, what was the process of editing with the agent and then the marketing of it to the editor, the work that the editor did on it, and then when the publicity department takes it over, basically what happens from there, and how did it go out into the world?

Because most authors, or would-be authors, they tend to focus more on the craft aspect, and they don't really think so much – they're so focused on getting the book done that they don't really think as much about what's going to happen after.

So that's one – I always think of that as sort of the encapsulation of what we're trying to do with the whole conference, that it sort of is – just like a guidepost for new authors to see what's going to be expected of them as they become professional, and as they make that transition.

KENNEALLY: Well, on the schedule, though, you've got plenty of opportunity for first-time authors to come and hear about the inside view of things, but you've also got



some real household names coming. Tell us who's on the program that we'll just go instantly, oh, wow, I have to be there for that.

SCHNELBACH: Oh, well, our main evening keynote, you might have heard of him – it's Wally Lamb, the author of *She's Come Undone*, *The Hour I First Believed*, and also the editor of a collection called *I'll Fly Away*, which is an anthology of writings that were done through his prison writing workshop that he does at a Connecticut Prison for Women.

Let's see, then our Friday lunchtime keynote speaker is going to be Lee Woodruff, who has written a book – basically – well, she's written two books. Her second one is just about to come out. Her first one was a memoir that she co-wrote with her husband Bob Woodruff, who was injured when he was reporting in Iraq. So they wrote a book about his recovery together, and now she's written sort of a follow-up memoir about – sort of the aftermath of all of that. So she's going to be speaking about that.

And then, Saturday, we're going to have Alan Zweibel, who was one of the original writers of *Saturday Night Live*, and who has also written several different humor books, and a couple of children's books. So those will all be very good.

And then, in addition to that, we just have some people from all across the spectrum of independent publishing, larger house publishing, sort of indie-writers, self-publishers, bloggers, all sorts of people.

KENNEALLY: You know, Manhattan is the center for publishing. Still, today, things are changing very fast, very much, because of the economy. But you're the Center for Independent Publishing. How is independent publishing looking these days? And tell us a bit about where you expect independent publishing to be going?

SCHNELBACH: OK, that's a good question. (laughter) I think everyone wants to know that one.

Well, basically, I think indie publishing is sort of stepping in to fill in some of the gaps that are being left by corporate publishing sort of having a difficult time right now. I think the indie publishing model has been – or is going to be, I think, the wave of the future, really. Sort of, you're giving smaller advances to authors, but the editor or the publisher and the author have much more of a shared stake in the book. They sort of promote it together, they work on it together, it's much more of a team effort. And then – so everyone is invested in it. It's not just somebody signing a piece of paper and somebody else is working on the book. Everybody works on the book together, which I think is very good.



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I think the smaller print runs that indie publishers do will be much more cost effective. And also, just the idea that they can focus so well on different aspects, different types of books, different genres, and they really know their genres inside out, so they really know how to promote their books to the right audiences more than, say, a larger house that has fingers in lots of different pies.

So I definitely think – this was actually something that we talked about quite a bit during the book fair, the independent and small book fair that we did in December, that I really do think that indie houses are sort of going to move into the forefront of the publishing scene, in New York and across the country as well. There are indie publishers popping up all over, that I think – that too will be, rather than having, I mean, obviously, publishing will always, I think, be centered in New York. But I think it's – there is going to be more national voices as well.

KENNEALLY: And that's all made possible by the Internet. It would have been true in the past, perhaps a generation ago, that to be part of the independent publishing scene in any kind of real way, you still had to come to some kind of major city – New York, Boston, San Francisco, whatever, because you didn't have the access to the market, you didn't have the access to the talent.

Now the Internet makes it possible not only to have that access from, literally, anywhere, but also to market the work to literally everywhere, right? And that's got to be a dramatic change for the Center, as well as for independent publishing.

SCHNELBACH: Oh, yeah. (laughter) I definitely think – that has been one of the key things that people have asked for, our membership have asked for, is just sort of more courses on how to learn, how to use the Internet, how to use social networking, and the social networking media, basically. We had a teleseminar – I guess it was about a month, month and a half ago, that was just about how to use your blog, how to use Facebook, how to use Twitter, all these things. Because I think that's going to be the most cost effective way and the best way to reach the most people to promote books in the future. I mean, I think it already is, but I think it's going to become much more of a force in marketing, even more than it is now.

So we're sort of – we're trying to do what we can to be really sensitive to our members' needs on that, and to provide them with education on how to use those resources so that they can really create an Internet presence and create their own image on the Internet so that it will be the best promotion for their book, for their publishing company, you know – whatever.



KENNEALLY: Well, it wouldn't surprise me that at the Roundtable Writers' Conference coming up on April 24th and 25th, there will be people out there on Twitter telling everybody, the whole world, about what they've just heard, a literary agent or a first time author say that they thought was really important.

Speaking of the Internet, before we go, we've been with Leah Schnelbach, who is the Interim Director of the New York Center for Independent Publishing. You have to tell us about your website, and what people can find there, but also, give them an idea of the setting here. This is a rather interesting building – a historic one, I presume, with an usual sort of host. Tell us just a bit about that, because when people come, they'll be surprised by the setting.

SCHNELBACH: Excellent. I get to talk about the parent organization – very cool.

Basically, our parent is the General Society for Mechanics and Tradesmen. It was founded in, I believe, 1785. It was an organization – it was a fraternal organization, originally, for mechanics, the – well, there weren't any electricians yet, but later on, sort of more craftspeople. And as the organization grew, it became more and more of an educational force, and it started to have classes, and sort of social opportunities for the wives and children of the craftspeople that were members. And then it slowly sort of morphed into what it is today, where we now host a variety of different cultural events, just open to the general public, some of them – some of them are geared straight toward writers. Some are about architecture, engineering, you know – we have all sorts of different things.

And we're in this beautiful building in midtown, which I believe dates to the 1840s, but maybe don't quote me on that. And we've moved into it – we've been here about a century now, if I remember correctly. And upstairs, we have the Mechanics' Institute, which is the host of evening classes for mechanics, plumbers, electricians, architects, all sorts of different people in these sorts of crafts can come in at night after work to update their skills, update their knowledge, and just stay right at the forefront of their careers.

And then, on the downstairs level, we have the General Society library, which, if I remember correctly, is the second oldest library in New York. It's a members-only library – we encourage everyone to join. And we have a great collection of all sorts of different books – fiction, non-fiction. It is used by the Mechanics' Institute as their library, as their school library.

And then our office, the New York Center for Independent Publishing office, is sort of tucked into a corner of the library. We have our own section, the Krause (sp?) Reference Center for Publishing, which is a whole collection of books just on the



history of publishing, publishers' memoirs, books about the craft of writing, of publicity in publishing, all sorts of – everything you can imagine, it's in there.

We also have our members' wall, which is a wall of bookcases that are just dedicated to our members' books. All of our members are encouraged to send their books in to us to be displayed. This is also where most of the Writers' Conference events will be taking place, will be in the library. There will be some upstairs in one of the classrooms.

Let's see, I'm trying to think of what else –

KENNEALLY: Oh, and the website for the Center, just in case people want to check it out. If they cannot make it for the Roundtable, which is April 24th and 25th, I do urge people the next time they're in Manhattan to try to drop by and just to see what's available. But tell us where to find you on the Web.

SCHNELBACH: Oh, well, I will be here, so if anyone drops by, I can take you on a brief tour. I'm always here, so – (laughter)

Our website is www.nycip.org, and that has information on membership, our past events, our future events, and just some history on the CIP as a whole. We also have a directory of our publisher members, and then we'll try to have as many links as we can to just interesting publishing news, and things that are of particular interest to independent publishers.

Now, the Writers' Conference has its own website, which is www.writersconferencenyc.org, and if you go to that site, that will have the schedule, it will have information on the keynoters, participant bios, and it will have a registration page, so that you can just register through PayPal right there on the site.

And if you have any questions, feel free to e-mail me or call me. So, my e-mail is contact@nycip.org, and the phone number here is (212) 764-7021, and I'll be here.

KENNEALLY: Well, we'll be here, too. I look forward to attending the Roundtable Conference. We've been speaking with Leah Schnelbach, who is the Interim Director of the New York Center for Independent Publishing. Thanks for being on *Beyond the Book*, Leah.

SCHNELBACH: Well, thank you for having me. Once again, this was a really fun interview. Thanks.



KENNEALLY: I enjoyed it too. And for everybody in the audience, thank you very much for listening to another installment of *Beyond the Book*. We hope to have you back very soon.

My name is Chris Kenneally. For everybody at Copyright Clearance Center, thanks for listening.

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