

BOOKNOTES

THE OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER OF THE WASHINGTON BOOK PUBLISHERS

November 23, 2005

www.washingtonbooks.org

The Washington Book Publishers, an informal, all volunteer group of editorial and publishing professionals in the Washington, DC, area, since 1976.

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Post your news on the Web site, or e-mail dleland@icma.org

The Washington
Book Publishers 

Dear Colleagues,

You may recall receiving Dan Sayre's report on the meeting he convened with heads of publishing entities back in August. During this meeting two committees were formed: Governance and Program Development. Progress has been slow; no president has turned up yet nor plans formed. Here we are at the thirty-year mark as a group, dealing with growing pains along with the increased pressure on people in publishing today. While clearly the group is focused on the purpose of book publishers and perpetuating the written word, the needs of individual members—of whom about 75 percent are editors—must also be met.

Just what do you, the member, want from this group? *Make your voice heard*—voice your opinions to one of the committee members listed on page 2.

While you're thinking about all of this, make plans to attend the next event:

Program and Holiday Party We hope to hear a brief comment on the current Google–print conundrum [see next paragraph], followed by a holiday party.

Date, time Thursday, December 1, 6–8 p.m.

Location Brookings Institution, 1775 Mass. Ave. NW.

Metro Dupont Circle; exit south, walk one block east on Mass. Ave. (Street parking may be available at 6:30 p.m. Area garages.)

Admission Free, as always, to members; \$5 donation requested from nonmembers.

RSVP, please, by Nov. 30 to our hospitality guru, christinehauser@msn.com.

January program (tba): Join us for a panel discussion on the Google conundrum when several knowledgeable speakers will present their views of what Google's decisions [see <http://print.google.com/googleprint/library.html>] mean to the book publishing world and what some possible scenarios might be. (Date to be announced—keep an eye on WBP's Web site.)

January 2006 is also the start of a new membership year, and your mission, should you choose to accept it, will be to pay dues: The same \$25 rate as in previous years—one of the best values in town. And, while you're thinking about that, recruit a new member. Our membership is growing older and is not being reconstituted with an influx of new, young, and eager publishing professionals. It's up to YOU to mentor your staff and encourage them to join this group, where every event offers a professional development opportunity. (Membership team contact information at left; form is on the Web site.)

October roundtables. The story on page 2 highlights some of the points that arose during the discussions on October 26. The 35–40 people who eagerly gathered that day are proof that we human beings still want to exchange knowledge in person. If you didn't get word of the event, it may be because we were not able to contact you by e-mail. Please give membership (left) your current contact information!

As some of you know, I will be leaving the area in a few months. I've "given notice" with this newsletter—which I began about twenty years ago. I've done a little of everything involved, and have always enjoyed it and learned a lot. I've posted a job description for the newsletter in a recent e-mail message [also on page 4], but, as yet, no one [or ones] has stepped forth to take it on. Beginning in 2006 it is likely that it will assume a new form. Will it become solely an electronic communication? Very likely. But, again, it's up to you, the member, to tell us what you want.—Dawn Leland

MEMBER
COMMITTEES TO
CONTACT WITH
YOUR FEEDBACK

Joe.Brinley@wilsoncenter.org
Adavies@cqpress.com

Committees

The executive committee

Charged with setting up a broader leadership [governance] structure for WBP
Ann Davies, Dru Dowdy,
Laura Lawson, Don
Reisman, Dan Snodderly,
Lynn Whitaker.

The program committee

Joe Brinley, Ann Davies,
Ann Mahoney, Dana
Pratt, Claire Reinburg,
Jon Sisk

Ad hoc members

Barbara Hart, Christine
Hauser, Linda Jorgensen,
Betsy Kulamer, Nancy
Lammers

WBP Remarks

Roundtable Reports

Some themes perpetually arise—the need for talented people and the ongoing issue of undervalued editing skills. Budgets are tight and schedules are even tighter. Ongoing concerns reach across all facets of publishing, including

- Content management: How digital publishing options might be applied; offering chapters, articles, and books for sale online in PDF or other electronic format.

- Is a resume sufficient to gain knowledge about a-freelancer's skills before hiring? Is a test is needed?

- Niche markets: How to reach them; how/where to acquire marketing lists; whether to partner into new markets;

- Direct mail vs. electronic promotions;

- Merits of print advertising (image/brand-building vs. sales)

Each discussion group touched on the usual topics but a few new issues emerged. They are:

Business and Management

Organizational mission statements may not be as common as one might think. Most participants represented publishers that do not have one but thought that having a mission statement is an important way for employees to place significance to their jobs.

On the trade vs. scholarly schism, it was noted that many well-known authors in scholarly circles were being wooed by large trade houses and, lured by the notion that trade publisher can print higher print runs because they have the marketing resources to promote sales.

Other questions

were posed on issues of content “re-purposing” and experience with XML coding. The Larger presses outsource some coding overseas—for example, to India.

One participant noted the problem of editors transferring their previous employer's house editorial styles inappropriately to their current employer. All said that the income from permissions and rights is a significant contribution to overall revenues. *Contact:* Andrea Higginbotham, ahigginbotham@cqpress.com.

Acquiring New Material

“Our acquisitions discussions ranged across several pressing topics, from how we recruit new authors to average print runs,” noted Claire Reinburg. Titles published per year ranged from six to 80, with three of the six presses represented falling in the 10-15 range. “Sharing specifics on the types of materials we request from authors at the initial review stage proved helpful. We discussed the workings of our editorial boards and strategies for tapping new authors—such as attending conferences or prospecting in-house,” she said.

“We also detailed review procedures for proposals and manuscripts and traded tips on how to deal with the dreaded late reviewers we all encounter. We talked about the benefits of sharing details about the types of new books we're seeking, so that we can refer authors to one another when a project arrives that may be a better fit for another press.” *Contact:* Claire Reinburg, creinburg@nsta.org

Good Editing: Publisher's Lifeblood

Seeming to prove that WBP's lifeblood is indeed editors, the copyediting roundtable discussion had the largest number of participants. A lively, rewarding, and informative session ensued, according to participants. Both those who hire freelance editors and those who are freelancers eagerly shared their perspectives about what is happening in editing today. A primary concern of several people dealt with editorial standards and two needs in particular:



Roundtable participants gathered on October 26 to learn. This occasional annual brownbag event has always drawn a substantial number of people eager for feedback on their concerns.



Photos: Dawn Leland

- guidance for contract editors before they begin a project;
- feedback after the project has ended so editors can be more attuned to each publisher's needs. Most editors *never* receive feedback and have no idea if they are doing a good job. [*Idea for a working group*: Create a feedback form to give publishers after work is done.]

One complaint was agreed upon: The chronic issue of references and bibliographies being a weakness among most writers and many editors. "As a long-time editor, I have never seen a reference list or bibliography that is complete and accurate," noted Barbara Hart. *Editing and proofreading testing*

The testing of new editors was also a contentious issue. Some long-time contract editors objected to being tested. "I explained that I've tested experienced editors who could not pass the equivalent of the final exam for my basic editing and proofreading class," she said. The group of editors reached a consensus that it was appropriate for the publisher to ask the prospective editor to do a sample of a few pages—no more than an hour—perhaps using the original draft of a published piece. It was noted that unscrupulous publishers ask multiple editors to "do a sample" of various chapters without paying for the work and then use the "free" editorial work. And "yes, sometimes publishers still want edits on paper—especially from a 'new' editor, because it is easier to see the suggested changes." One participant mentioned having "an application from a person who said she does all proofreading electronically. Everyone groaned! We concurred that final proofing must be done on hard copy."

Contact: Barbara Hart, BHart@pubspros.com

[*Note*: Ann Davies of CQ Press generously offered a room if this group wants to meet again (or regularly) to continue discussions. Please contact her, adavies@cqpress.com, to get the ball rolling.]

Sales and Marketing

Four people sat in on this topic—two were from nonprofit publishers who sell via direct marketing only; one was from a nonprofit publisher who sells via direct marketing and the trade; and one was from a commercial publisher who sells through the trade almost exclusively. "Even with this small group, the marketing and sales challenges presented were very broad," noted Lori Woehrle. Each person named one or two particular ones, and brainstorming of ideas and approaches ensued.

Job postings sources: publishersweekly.com; mediabistro.com

Among the many topics discussed were these current issues:

- Google print: Benefits, problems, and how it works;
- Fulfillment: In-house vs. outside, vendors, and evaluations;
- Obtaining lists, avoiding spam;
- Distribution: Negotiating with large distributors when your list is small; who to use; whether to distribute through major electronic distributors such as Amazon or B&N.com.

Other questions arose that might be useful for future discussions:

- Should nonprofit direct sales publishers consider trade distribution, and how do you get there?
- Beyond junk mail: What's working in direct sales?
- Online access to content: Why buy the cow when you can get the milk for free? How much content should publishers give away and does it hurt or help sales.

Contact: Lori Woehrle, woehrle@case.org

Good Book Design

Dan Kohan (designer for 2005 WBP awards "noir-themed" campaign) facilitated the roundtable discussion on book design issues. He noted that it was "a small and focused group who covered a lot of ground. Attendees had a range of experience, and, consequently, much of the discussion was tutorial or mentoring." Debates ensued on

- Quark vs. InDesign, which has been taking over the professional design market. A few people are still using Quark or PageMaker and had questions about whether it is worth making the switch.
 - Deadlines—Why the designer always gets squeezed when work runs late.
 - PDF format and online delivery: Is it a good idea, or is it unfriendly to users, who have to print out their own books? Does it hurt or help sales?
 - XML: An up-and-coming technology in publishing that can really speed up production if it's implemented properly.
 - Print on demand: Is anyone using it? Does it make sense? Consensus: Not really.
 - Digital vs. traditional offset printing: Digital has an important role, particularly for short runs or reprints, but quality is an issue.
- Contact*: Dan Kohan, dan@sensicaldesign.com.

WRITERS TO TRY

Humor

Bradley Denton, *Laughin' Boy*

Humor and language

Richard Lederer and John Shore, *Comma Sense: A Fundamental Guide to Punctuation*

William Safire, *How Not to Write: The Essential Misrules of Grammar*

Corporate capers and international intrigue

Akhil Reed Amar, *America's Constitution: A Biography*

John C. Bogle, *The Battle for the Soul of Capitalism*

James Howard Kunstler, *The Long Emergency: Surviving the Converging Catastrophes of the Twenty-first Century*

George Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*

Zainab Salbi and Laurie Becklund, *Between Two Worlds: Escape From Tyranny—Growing Up in the Shadow of Saddam*

Anthony Shadid, *Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War*

Yaroslav Trofimov, *Faith at War: A Journey on the Frontlines of Islam, From Baghdad to Timbuktu*

Matthew R. Simmons, *Twilight in the Desert: The Coming Saudi Oil Shock and the World Economy*

The Washington Book Publishers

c/o Publications Professionals,
3702 Oak Hill Way
Fairfax, VA 22030
BookNotes, May-June-July 2005



www.washingtonbooks.org

Join your colleagues on December 1

LITERARY LOSSES

Edward Bunker, 71, crime novelist, actor, and former convict.

Vine Deloria, Jr., 72, Writer, scholar, American Indian activist

Shelby Foote, 88, novelist, historian.

James Haskins, 63, writer of African American history for youth, teacher.

Evan Hunter, 78, novelist, and as Ed McBain, crime writer.

Claude Simon, 91, French novelist, Nobel laureate.

Calendar

DECEMBER

THURS. 8, INDESIGN USER GROUP. At U.S. Navy Memorial Audit., 701 Pennsylvania Ave., NW. www.indesignusergroup.com/washingtondc

THURS. 15, ENGLAND. Reception 6:30, dinner 7:00, program 7:45 p.m. Linda Levy Peck, history professor/author, co-curator of a Folger Library exhibition *Consuming Splendor*. Dacor Bacon House, 1801 F St. NW, \$30/\$35. Program only, \$15. ESU.

SUN., 18, 5 p.m. YULETIDE REVELRY. Moncure Residence; with buffet, caroling. Meet tutors in English in Action program. Bring small unwrapped gifts for needy children in our region. 1614 Foxhall Road NW. Free, but tax-deductible donations to help defray expenses and support the ESU's educational and cultural activities are encouraged. ESU.

Check these sources for other activities:

LOCATIONS

AAP: Assn. of Amer. Publishers, www.publishers.org

AAUP: Assn. of Amer. University Presses, www.aaup.uchicago.edu/

AIGA: Amer. Inst. of Graphic Arts, www.aigawashdc.org

CB: Chapters Lit. Bookstore, chapters.literary@erols.com

CPCUG: Capital Personal Computer Users Group, www.cpcug.org/user/entrepreneur

DCWW: DC Web Women, www.dcwebwomen.org

ESU: English Speaking Union, www.esuwdc.org

FSL: Folger Shakespeare Library, www.folger.edu, www.penfaulkner.org

LC, Cfb: Library of Congress, Center for the Book, www.loc.gov; www.loc.gov/cfb

NA: Nat. Archives, www.nara.gov

NMWA: Museum of Women in Arts, www.nmwa.org.

P&P: Politics & Prose Books., www.politics-prose.com

SRAP: Smithsonian Associates, <http://smithsonianassociates.org/>

SSP: Society for Scholarly Publishing, www.sspnet.org

VB: Vertigo Books, 202/429-9272.

WC: the Writers Center, www.writer.org

WIW: Wash. Indep. Writers, www.washwriter.org

WLC: Wash. Literacy Council, 202-387-9029.

WNBA: Women's Nat. Book Assn., www.wnba-books.org

Job Bank

For complete listings, go to the WBP Web site, www.washingtonbooks.org. Go to the site also to submit your job listings.

Associate Editor, Brookings Institution Press

Full-time position with possibility of flexible part-time schedule.

Washington Book Publishers volunteer positions:

1. News coordinator/producer

Assures publication of periodic newsletter/communications to members; tasks can be taken on by one person or several. But one coordinator is needed:

Editorial. Collect content and/or request articles from volunteers. Solicit writers/assure write-up of events, along with photos and contact information. Write brief articles. Compile job and calendar listings. Edit/copyedit or obtain service of volunteer editor for news text and final page proofing prior to distribution.

Communication. Maintain members' e-mail list for use with e-mail communications [obtained from membership]. Send occasional news and notices.

Photography. Obtain photos of events. Scan photos or convert electronic images using Photoshop. Provide digital images in appropriate format for print.

Layout and printing. Layout pages in PageMaker, Quark, or InDesign. Edit text to fit during layout process. Assure final page proofreading. Obtain final page approval from the president. Produce electronic files for printer and assure instructions. Assure additional quantities that might be needed for distribution at other events or with press releases.

Mailing and distribution. Work with membership to obtain mailing labels. Maintain mailing list of complimentary recipients. Obtain mailing list from membership coordinator. Assure instructions to mailer.

Distribute bulk copies to president, membership, others as requested. Submit invoices to WBP treasurer, maintains receipts for reimbursement

Other tasks as necessary. Order stationery, oversee printing of other materials such as the invitation to the awards event and collateral pieces. Contact dleland@icma.org.

2. Publicity Coordinator. Assure distribution of periodic press releases to relevant groups: Confirm information. Write news release. Assure proofreading. Obtain and maintain distribution list. Distribute by mail or e-mail. Contact dleland@icma.org