

**Recap of IBPA Publishing University 2019 Sessions
Attended by Laura Baker, Books Marketing Manager**

The 2019 Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA) Publishing University took place April 5-6 in Chicago, IL. The following is a summary of my notes from the sessions I attended.

Session: Opening Keynote: Rethinking Book Publishing: Innovation and Culture 2019

Date: Friday, April 5, 2019

Speaker: Dominique Raccach, Founder and CEO of Sourcebooks

Session overview: *In an industry dominated by giant companies, Sourcebooks has grown from small to large while maintaining its independence. During this keynote address, Sourcebooks' founder & CEO Dominique Raccach will share what she's learned in over 30 years of successful independent publishing.*

You are not a publisher when your book is printed; you are a publisher when someone is willing to pay for your book.

The model Sourcebooks uses is profoundly different from other publishers. Sourcebooks focuses on three things:

1. Publish **authors**, not books. Work hard to create **author success**.
 - They want to serve the authors they represent
 2. Use **data** to guide key decisions, **rigorous approach** to key elements of book communication
 - Data can connect readers with the best content
 - Our problem as book publishers is that the failure rate is too high
 - Biggest reason a book fails is not knowing the target
 - Four components to creating strong books:
 - i. Positioning
 - ii. Title
 - iii. Content and internal design
 - iv. Cover and packaging
 3. Deeply committed to **innovation** as a strategy
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Session: The Ten Habits of a Successful Publisher

Date: Friday, April 5, 2019

Speaker: Kathleen Welton – Publisher, aka Books

Session overview: *During this session, Kathleen Welton will share proven principles that deliver top results for those involved in the book publishing industry.*

- Kathleen shared what she has learned over the last 40 years that you can incorporate now, or in the future, to build and expand your publishing program

- The three highlighted points below are what Kathleen feels are the main habits
- The key to all habits is *connection*

1. Asking the right questions

- Do you like what you are doing? Is it the right process? (ask inspiring questions)
 - Why did this work?
 - Based on your experience what do you suggest we do here?
 - Can that be done in any other way?
- Embrace a culture of asking questions
- Questions not to ask
 - What's the problem with this project?
 - Why are you behind schedule?
- Questions for team meetings
- Questions for authors
 - Get them talking about something other than the manuscript...
 - What are your goals for writing this book?
 - What are your thoughts on the audiences for your books?
 - How do you like to best communicate on the editorial process?
- Questions for yourself
 - What is your vision and mission?
 - What do you want to publish and in what formats?
 - What is your strategic purpose and plan?
- How do we take this and turn it into results and a strategy?
 - Write questions down

2. Building a team

- Get the right people in the right saddles (seats)
 - Focus on bringing out the best quality of each person in their role
- How to turn this habit of building a team into results?
 - Keep a variety of saddles
 - Assess current fit and future needs
 - Be accountable
 - Train to expand both individual and team building skills
 - Reward milestones and celebrate success

3. Connecting with customers

- If you don't do anything else, do this (connect with customers)
- As a publisher, the author is your customer – it is important to learn from them, to share with them, to inspire together...
- Set goals together of what is to be accomplished

- How to turn this into results?
 - Consider low cost/no cost connections
 - Save the date postcards and emails
 - Book launch parties
 - Testimonials
 - Amazon customer comments
 - Create your intention, understand the intention, then set goals for it
- 4. Developing editorial roadmaps
 - Roadmaps
 - Examples: books by quarter, types of books, categories for content, total books by year, schedules, phase 1: project planning, phase 2: publication, phase 3: promotion
- 5. Finding your story
 - Lighthouse principles – Stephen Covey’s The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People
 - Be proactive
 - Begin with the end in mind
 - Put first things first
 - Think win-win
 - Seek first to understand, then to be understood
 - Synergize
 - Sharpen the saw
 - There are no shortcuts, timing is key too
 - Breaking things down is important, think of your story in chapters
 - Purpose
 - Characters - both in the book and those in life around you
 - Biography
 - Passion
 - Timing
 - Planning
- 6. Giving back
 - Be a part of something larger than yourself
 - Possibilities: corporate matching, areas of interest, % of revenue, fundraisers, sponsorships, focus on interests, partnerships, volunteer days...
- 7. Minding your own business
 - Message – what is your look and feel
 - Content – focus is on quality, and it is going to increase
 - Finance – P&L is important, be mindful of small expenses
 - Revenue – 80% of your revenue will come from 20% of your products
 - Strategy – having a plan is essential, and update it regularly

8. Monitoring trends

- Research – magazines, reports
- Industry – follow companies and experts you like and that are leaders in the field
- Groups – affiliations, memberships
- Look to bookstores, newspapers, magazines, book publishing organizations, Amazon (what are people in your space doing, saying, selling; how do they set up their bios, descriptions, etc), industry statistics, economic trends, affinity groups

9. Nurturing authors

- Understand that it is a relationship
- Create author celebration events
- Respect

10. Remaining curious

- Inside: passion, possibilities, purpose
- Outside: economy, marketplace, reality
- How:
 - write dreams down
 - be an apprentice...always - you can't know everything, be persistent...

Session: The Many Facets of Educational Publishing

Date: Friday, April 5, 2019

Panelists: Ian Lamont – Founder, i30 Media; Richard Lena – President and Publisher, Brattle Publishing Group; Karen Pavlicin-Fraguito – Publisher, Elva Resa Publishing

Session overview: *Education is one of the book industry's leading market segments. K-12, life-long learning products, and community and corporate training materials are glimpses into the lucrative and fulfilling world of educational publishing. In this session, the speakers will share their strategies for entering various facets of the market, instructional design and development practices for products and services and marketing and distribution outlets.*

Opening remarks from panelists

- Richard, Brattle Publishing Group
 - Educational publishing focus is pre-k through 12 for Brattle
 - Educational publishing goes beyond textbooks and course books – it encompasses so many things. We can look across society and produce products that will help educate.
 - There are different ways/avenues of selling: through distributions, to independent reps, to the school directly...
- Ian, i30 Media
 - Doesn't see himself as an educational publisher, focus is on lifelong learners
 - Didn't do any book publishing prior to 2012, but had other media experience

- Found that schools were starting to buy his products (*LinkedIn in 30 minutes*, etc.)
- Finding who to go to for book distribution is a struggle – schools vary by district, and state, in their rules and there isn't a key position/person type to go to for sales
- Karen, Elva Resa Publishing
 - Primary imprint is books for military families with a focus on early education

Questions FAQ

- **Q: How do you create product concepts and how to you determine if there is a market for them?**
 - Richard
 - Consider the state rules
 - Look at what the distributors are asking for
 - Go back to the basics
 - Go to the end customer and ask them what their problems are and how they can be solved and what materials are needed around it
 - Go to students and talk with them to find where instruction gaps are
 - Ian
 - Started in the beginning with what he knew
 - Refined his approach and started to evaluate the marketplace – does the marketplace need this book or not? Was also careful to not make assumptions about what *he thinks* they want vs what they actually want.
 - Use data to make a decision and talk with people
 - If people like something, find out why...
 - Karen
 - Looks at the path of the learner and the environment around the learner (teachers, parents, community, school, etc.)
 - Think about other supporting materials you can provide to help them see the value in order to reach the end reader
 - The overall arch of what the person is learning and the path of learning within the content
 - Thinks about all the people involved along the path
 - Key theme across all three panelists: the importance of checking in with the customer, the end user
- **Q: Going to market, and distribution... What is your sales effort like? What is your distribution like?**
 - Richard
 - School suppliers will come to him; districts will come through an independent rep
 - Ian
 - Consumer market, librarians, distributor
 - Discovered you can do a lot of sales online, you don't have to have a distributor
 - For the library market, make sure your product is ready for librarians (have a CIP block) and make sure it can get in front of librarians
- **Q: How do I get to the people who are going to buy the books? How do you get to the right buyer?**
 1. Know the restrictions and processes

- Each state may have a different process for accepting vendors (and school districts too)
 - It is different for all levels too: elementary through university – some universities have a review panel and in others the professor will pick the text
 - Look at where you think your biggest opportunity is, and start with looking at what the requirements are for that space – then it will be easier to learn what you need to do in the other spaces
2. Look at other organizations already in that space with like-minded missions and follow their practices
- Think beyond traditional education and ways to make the book interactive
 - Don't always worry about it being taught in a classroom – where else are kids at and learning about the subject (ex. afterschool clubs and programs)

Q: How do you measure success?

- Richard – are the kids learning, and performing?; sales
 - Ian – sales, awards, audience buzz
 - Karen – did this book do what we wanted it to do?; audience response
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Session: Day Two Opening Keynote: Defining the Current and Future Meaning of “Publisher”

Date: Saturday, April 6, 2019

Panelists: Leslie Browning – Founder and Publisher, Homebound Publications; Seth Dellon – Dir. of Strategic Development, Publishers Weekly; Kelly Peterson – Dir. of Client Services, Inscribe Digital; Kathy Strahs – Founder, Burnt Cheese Press

Session overview: *While indie bookstores selling print copies are thriving once more, emerging technologies and platforms like smart speakers and content subscriptions are making writing available to consumers in new ways. As publishers consider their business models for now and the future, it begs the question: what does it mean to be a publisher?*

- What is a book and what makes a publisher?
 - A book is a series of words (or a collection of things as not all books have words) that convey an idea
 - A publisher helps get those ideas in front of people
- All panelists use print and one panelist suggests that eBooks are a great way to enter the market prior to print
- Marketing is a lot of work, it doesn't stop
 - Look at your content in a new way, as a consumer. Think about what appeals to consumers.
- Retain your files, keep a digital (electronic) file of your book (this will be important for the future of your content)
- Short form content is the future (serialized content)
 - Attention spans are getting shorter and digestible series (serialized content) is growing
 - People are giving up their reading time for other forms of media that are snackable
- It is ok to give away samples of your content

- Giving away content gives people an opportunity to see if they like it. If they do, they will come back and buy the book.
 - Giving the readers something of value in the form of free content helps books sell
 - In regards to social media, find where your customers are and learn and use those programs
 - Reader loyalty is to authors, not publishers
 - What is the publisher of the future going to have to be doing in order to be successful?
 - Adaptability; try new platforms
 - Be open to try new things and know that not all will work
 - Think about audio and smart speakers (ex. Alexa) – consider how your book will sound in addition to being read
 - Digitization of your files will be key
 - Go to your audience, don't let them find you
 - Let your fans be your advocate, find out how they found you so you can find more readers and ideas
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Session: Selling Outside the Box: Why Special Sales Should Always be in your Plans

Date: Saturday, April 6, 2019

Panelists: Karen Pavlicin-Fragrino – Publisher, Elva Resa Publishing; Richard Williams – VP Publisher Development, IPG; Gail Woodard – President, Dudley Court Press

Moderator: Kelly Peterson – Dir. of Client Services, Inscribe Digital

Session overview: *Publishers typically focus on how to get their books into bookstores, but some of the biggest selling titles have made their money outside of box - or big box - storefronts. From crowdfunding to niche vendors, there are great ways to connect with new revenue streams, have less competition for your products, and stand out instead of being part of a crowd. But how do you identify your niche special sales markets? This panel of experts will show you how they found money thinking outside the box.*

Special sales is about finding niche opportunities

Q: What is your expertise with special sales?

- Karen – ¾ of our business is to military and government buyers; we also sell into museums, gift shops, and schools
- Gail – have had a few opportunities on a couple books to sell into other areas than book trade (PBS uses books as a premium for a fundraising special)
- Richard – expertise is as a distributor on the sales side

Q: What is special sales?

- Richard – anything not in bookstore trade; special sales are important with the growth of Amazon
- Karen – 1) Look at the marketplace (how the end user will get your product) 2) Look at internal processes. If the effort involved requires you to change everything that your team does or requires more hoops to run through – anything that disrupts your normal process – it is a special sale
- Gail – anything beyond Amazon or bookstore trade

Q: How do you prepare for special sales opportunities?

- Richard – you have to know where your market is and look and see what is being sold into that market, you want your product to be comparable
- Karen – look at how the end reader is receiving the product; be prepared for customer requirements that might require special shipping, sizing, or content changes
- Gail – we step back from how to negotiate with PBS and instead find out what makes sense for the author and publisher; figure out what the advertising value is for them long term

Q: How do you factor special sales into printing and acquisition decisions?

- Richard – We don't acquire with unit quantity in mind; as a publishing partner we can advise publishers. Look at special sales as a marketing opportunity and not a sales opportunity (for ex. selling into Marriott guest rooms)
- Karen – when we look at a print run we think about what they will need for 6-9 months out
- Gail – Generally print POD, for some authors that is all they do unless they know that they will sell a large quantity for a special event. For PBS events, we can forecast and print more for that event. Otherwise we will do POD until it makes sense to do a longer run.

Q: What tips can you share for going into special sales marketplaces?

- Richard – the more you do it, the more familiar you get with doing it; find the right person to work with
- Karen – go where people go and look at how you can support them; help at their events, get involved with your partners and in the communities where you want to have your books – have conversations with them and get to know them; think about what value add you can give them
- Gail – special sales are hard, it takes time and energy to be a sales person, you have to make a decision about your time and where to spend it; there are lots of ideas, so consider which ones you can take time to implement

Q: How do you get authors involved, the right way, in special sales opportunities?

- Karen – listen to the ideas of authors and play into their strengths; suggest to authors that are speakers that as part of their speaker contract their book is on every seat at the event
- Gail – have discussions with authors going in about what special sales opportunities might exist and let them know that you are there to help and support them; have a one-on-one with authors to gauge what they are doing and what they can do and let them know you are there

Q: What should you watch out for with special sales?

- Richard – make sure you have the publishers best interests in mind; want it to be a lucrative opportunity, but in some cases sacrifice it for a long-term opportunity; know your limits, your publishers are the knowledge experts
- Gail – looking at the economics is really important
- Karen – look at the long term and your business model and make sure that special sales fits in and is where you want to be going; also test some things (special sales opportunities) out with smaller projects

Q: Final pieces of advice?

- Richard – keep your expectations realistic; think of rejection as normal so when you get a deal it is a boost (*said with a smile*)
- Karen – always be reminding yourself of what your mission is and make sure that is what is driving your decisions

- Gail – stay open to ideas, but be cautious about diving into every new idea as it is hard work

Additional comments:

- Know your market, when you know who your audience is you can start thinking outside of the box (advice for a publisher looking to get into special sales)
 - Special sales can also be a good way to find new sales avenues for your backlist
 - Fiction and literature are not often seen as special sales unless they have a niche – look at the content of the fiction to find a connection for a source of special sales, something with a particular fan base
 - If there are people of significance or importance mentioned in your book they may need copies
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Session: Using Keywords and Metadata to Take Your Digital Marketing to the Next Level

Date: Saturday, April 6, 2019

Speaker: Joshua Talent, Firebrand Technologies

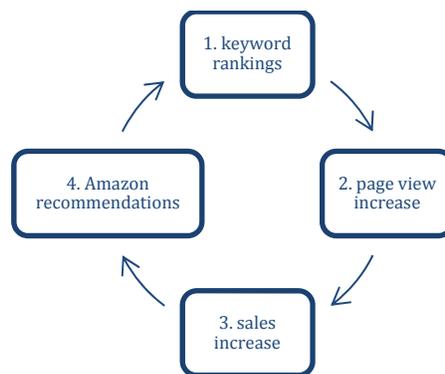
Session overview: *The metadata you send out to retailers is how consumers decide whether or not to actually make a purchase. It is imperative that publishers provide powerful, targeted, and complete metadata, and take advantage of all of the options available to them in that area. This session will cover how to best utilize the power of metadata and keyword optimization to capitalize on your opportunity to connect with readers and buyers and increase the visibility of your books.*

- Goal for this session is to help you understand how keywords work
- Keywords can increase your visibility in the marketplace
- Why metadata matters?
 - It makes a difference to the people who are trying to find your books
 - Publishers lose sight of the fact that their data can make more sales
 - Nielsen (NDP) did a study of best-selling titles in 2016...
 - Titles with basic metadata = 75% higher sales
 - Fiction: titles with basic metadata had 170% higher sales
 - Description, author bio, and reviews = titles with all three had 72% higher sales
 - Keywords = 34% higher sales
 - The key for this is that you are “merchandising” your books – you do this by the data you send out
- What is a keyword?
 - A word or a phrase that is used by search engines (recommend using phrases that are 2-3 words)
 - Keywords are an augmentor of, not a catalyst for, search visibility. What this means is the keywords you apply to your books aid the visibility of it in addition to the marketing you do
- People buy books based on:
 - Recommendations
 - Advertisements
 - Bookstore
 - Online store
 - Searching – Amazon says that most customers find products via search

- Think about this when you are putting your data together as that data will help people find your books
- Google doesn't care about keywords, it cares about showing people relevant information based on the terms they are searching on (Google doesn't care about selling, they care about information)
- Amazon cares about selling people products

Digging deeper into keywords

- Amazon is essentially the only retailer that uses keywords so, from here on, Josh mostly focused on Amazon... but he believes that the information that follows will apply when other retailers use keywords
- What is a good keyword for Amazon?
 - Something that makes it discoverable
 - Think outside of a publishing mindset to describe your book; consumers use a different language
 - Use the words they are using as keywords for your book
 - Keywords are based on long-tail queries
 - Ex. "romance" vs "historical romance in Florence"
- Amazon keywords are based on high commercial intent – shows that you are interested in getting something right now
 - Google: if you add "buy", "get", "discount", "deal" – it will show items for purchase, otherwise it will show anything related to that topic/keyword
 - Amazon's long-tail query (length of the query) will be the key
- How can you show up (your book) in more long-tail queries? How can it show up in front of someone with high commercial intent?
 - You can provide the fodder/the keywords, for high commercial intent
 - The key is to pick the best ones and put them at the top of the list; Amazon knows that you are not just providing them words but combines the words to come up with derived keywords to help surface your book
- The book description is not indexed by Amazon search engine, so it is not bad practice to use your description as a keyword. Title and subtitles are important and are indexed.
- Marketing copy should go in your book description, not in your subtitle!
- When you do your keywords like this (long-tail based on high commercial intent) you use the Virtuous Cycle



As Amazon puts out recommendations, they put out more keywords which keeps the cycle going

- Best practices: what can you do to build keywords
 - Provide as many as you can
 - Don't duplicate other words, don't stem words
 - Think like your consumers – consider what they think when they are typing in words in the keyword field
- Ways to build keywords:
 - 1. Manual creation
 - Tools you can use:
 - Ubersuggest.org
 - Google AdWords
 - Keywordtool.io
 - Pros of manual creation
 - DIY approach
 - Does not require a large investment
 - Cons of manual creation
 - Takes a lot of time
 - Requires in-depth knowledge of the book
 - Can be less effective than automation
 - 2. Book text scanning
 - Pros – gives you more details about the book's own language
 - Cons – not the audience language
 - 3. Audience analysis
 - Audience language or consumer signals
 - How your audience thinks about your books is how they will search for it
 - There are many places to get signals or find out what people are saying about your book - use what others are saying as keywords
 - Sources include: reviews, Goodreads, NetGalley, Bookish, forums, social media, blogs, Library Thing
 - This is the most important way to build your keyword list, do this (audience analysis)
 - Once you have your data and analysis for your titles, do it for all your book's competitors titles
 - Convert the raw language you have from your data and analysis into keywords and organize them
- Once you apply your keywords, track your page views and sales