



President's Message

Springtime reinvigorates our association

By Sheila Ruth

Spring always seems to bring with it a sense of excitement. The weather gets warmer, the days grow longer, new growth begins to emerge and migratory animals return. It's a season of change and growth, and a great opportunity for organizations to look to the future.

The MBPA Board of Directors is looking to the future as we work to grow the organization into a vital, active organization that will meet the needs of you, the independent publishers of the MidAtlantic area.

Board member Mary Shafer just returned from a retreat hosted by PMA for affiliate organizations like ours. She returned brimming with ideas, excitement, and offers of help from PMA and other affiliates. Mary's report on the retreat appears on page three.

continued on page 9

Industry advocacy groups react to Amazon's bully POD policy

by Mary Shafer

If you haven't heard about it yet, you will.

On April 1, Amazon.com issued a new policy aimed at publishers who use print-on-demand technology to sell directly on Amazon.com. (the full policy may be found on the Amazon website at <http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=176060&p=irol-printondemand>.)

Most of the significant writers' and publishers' professional organizations are expressing concern that this new policy could cause significant financial hardship for small and independent publishers, and the authors whose work they publish.

PMA, The Independent Book Publishers Association, wasted no time in responding to the online bookselling behemoth's new policy, which smacks of monopoly practices and a neighborhood bully attitude.

Terry Nathan, PMA Executive Director, issued a press release on April

3, speaking out against Amazon's directive that publishers either must print their books on demand exclusively at BookSurge—Amazon's subsidiary printer—for fulfillment of orders placed with Amazon, or incur additional cost to print elsewhere and maintain inventory with the online retailer.

"This policy imposes a significant financial burden on tens of thousands of small and independent publishers who can least afford it," Nathan points out. "Without the opportunity to benefit from competitive pricing, small publishers risk at best an expensive and needless overhaul of their manufacturing process, and at worst, the loss of their livelihood. On behalf of all the small and independent publishers whose businesses are in jeopardy, we urge Amazon to reconsider its position."

Indeed, the move comes as a surprise to many who have perceived

continued on page 2



**Uhh...
we don't
think so.**



Publishers' and writers' professional associations have so far come out unanimously against the new POD policy advanced by Amazon.com.

In This Issue

President's Message	
Groovin' With Springtime	1
Amazon Goes Too Far	
Trade groups just say no	1
Member Report	
PMA Affiliate Retreat 2008	3
It's That Time Again	
Book Awards Competitions	4
Get Your Marketing On	
Upcoming Events	5
The Seven Deadlies	
Book Promotion No-Nos	6
Target Practice	
Write For Your Audience	8
Marketing Opportunity	
Last Call for Spring Mailings	9
Vendor Profile	
First National	
Merchant Solutions	10

Amazon as a friend to small and independent publishers.

“Over the years, Jeff Bezos and his company have given small and independent publishers a level playing field to compete with the largest of companies,” Nathan continues. “Suddenly, this magnificent playing field has been converted into a ‘members only’ club, to the detriment of those very publishers who have contributed to Amazon’s success. We will continue to monitor developments in the weeks ahead.”

Similar views have been expressed by other publishing and writers’ professional organizations. Small Publishers Association of North America (SPAN), like PMA, is a nonprofit trade association. It represents more than a thousand book publishers and authors. SPAN’s Executive Director, Scott Flora, issued his own statement on the heels of that from PMA.

“Our members are POD publishers, authors who use POD publishing, and traditional independent publishers,” writes Flora. “Most of our members are vendors of Amazon.com through one your programs. It is fair to say that almost all of our publishers and authors who use POD to distribute through Amazon.com will be negatively affected by this new policy.”

Flora echoes the surprise at Amazon’s new unfriendly policy in a letter to Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos:

“I have always liked Amazon and have found you a good partner to independent publishers. SPAN has had an Amazon representative at our last three national conferences and currently have an Amazon Advantage discount program as a benefit for our members.”

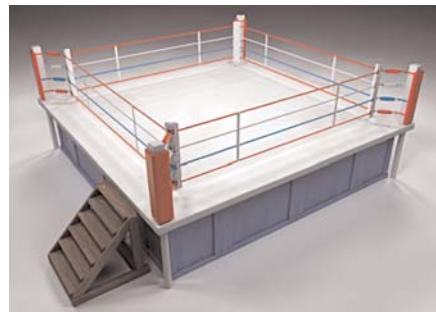
Flora’s letter goes on to detail mainly concern about SPAN members’ documented concerns over BookSurge product quality and potential for financial hardship caused by the strongarm tactic.

The Authors Guild (www.authorsguild.org), the nation’s largest society of published book authors, has also taken a strong stance against the rigid new policy. This group calls into question the sincerity of Amazon’s motives for the move.

“Amazon pitched this as a customer service matter, a means for more

speedily delivering print-on-demand books and allowing for the bundling of shipments with other items purchased at the same time from Amazon,” says the organization’s press release.

“It also put a bit of an environmental spin on the move — claiming less transportation fuel is used (this is unlikely, but that’s another story) when all items are shipped directly from Amazon. We, and many others, think something else is afoot. Ingram Industries’ Lightning Source is currently the dominant printer for on-demand titles, and they appear to be quite efficient at their task. They ship on-demand titles shortly after they are ordered through Amazon directly to the customer. It’s a nice business for Ingram, since they get a percentage of the sales and a printing fee for every on-demand book they ship. Amazon would be foolish not to covet that business.



“Once Amazon owns the supply chain, it has effective control of much of the “long tail” of publishing — the enormous number of titles that sell in low volumes but which, in aggregate, make a lot of money for the aggregator. We suspect this maneuver by Amazon is far more about profit margin than it is about customer service or fossil fuels. The potential big losers (other than Ingram) if Amazon does impose greater discounts on the industry, are authors — since many are paid for on-demand sales based on the publisher’s gross revenues — and publishers.”

The group is reviewing the antitrust and other legal implications of Amazon’s move. They invite input from those who believe they might be affected. Call 212-563-5904 (ask for the legal services dept.) or e-mail staff@authorsguild.org.

The American Society of Journalists


and Authors (ASJA), the nation’s trade association for freelance nonfiction writers, has expressed disgust with Amazon’s announced move, stating on its website, “At first, Amazon representatives denied threatening small booksellers with having the “buy it” buttons for their books turned off if they didn’t sign on the dotted line. Later, Amazon admitted the move, as reported in *Writer’s Weekly* and *The Wall Street Journal*. The contract being offered to print-on-demand publishers, which ASJA officers have seen, also includes a confidentiality clause forbidding disclosure of not just specific contract terms, as is typical, but any discussion at all. Thus, small publishers who have signed the contract may not say so, much less reveal the pressure they were under.”

ASJA also reveals that, “In addition, Amazon is punishing publishers who sell their books at a discount from cover price directly on their publisher’s websites. It is taking that discounted price as the book’s “cover price” and then applying their own discounts accordingly.”

This group is taking an aggressive stance on the issue, promising to urge the Washington state attorney general’s office to investigate whether Amazon’s move constitutes restraint of trade or otherwise violates anti-trust laws.

“We applauded when Jeff Bezos and Amazon gave small publishers and even writers who self-published a way to get their books before the public,” observed ASJA President Russell Wild. “With these grabby, strong-arm tactics, Amazon negates all that — and the years of goodwill it has built up with writers, who ultimately will bear the brunt of any price increases in the printing of independently published books.”

It’s shaping up to be a real David-and-Goliath fight, sure to be the talk of the BEA show floor and a hot topic at the upcoming PMA University in California next month.

Stay tuned as MBPA follows developments, which we’ll report in this newsletter and on our website at www.midatlanticbookpublishers.com. 

2008 PMA Affiliate Retreat/Networking Event Report

By MBPA board member Mary Shafer

On April 3-4, I had the privilege of representing MBPA at the third annual PMA Affiliate Retreat, held at the Marriott Nashville At Vanderbilt. Surrounded by the beauty of the Southern university campus coming alive in springtime, I joined representatives of ten other PMA affiliate groups and five PMA board members for an intense day-and-a-half of brainstorming, sharing and a bit of laughter...all in the service of improving our Affiliate experience.

We first met on Thursday around 3:00 to take in a warm welcome from organizers Carlene Sippola of Whole Person Associates in Duluth, Minn., and PMA president Florrie Binford Kichler. In a round of introductions, I met my compatriots for the retreat.

Betsy Wright-Lampe, president and editorial director of Rainbow Books, Inc., sat to my right, representing the Florida Publishers Association. What a ball of fire! Not only did she bring us all coconut treats from the Sunshine State, she also generously handed out CDs containing digital documents created for FPA use, with permission to use them

(L to R) PMA President Florrie Binford Kichler waits with MBPA board member Mary Shafer, PMA Board member Carlene Sippola, SPAWN President Patricia Fry and FPA President Betsy Wright-Lampe for the rest of the participants to arrive for dinner at this year's PMA Affiliate Retreat in Nashville.

— Photo by Bill Fessler



for our own purposes. Similarly, Pat Morris of the Midwest Independent Publishers Association passed out copies of her group's Call for Entries for their annual regional book awards competition, among other documents she encouraged us to copy and use for our own efforts.

Patricia Fry was a wealth of knowledge in handling aspects of a national coverage group, as she shared her approach to marketing SPAWN, the Small Publishers and Writers Network. Brian Jud, of "Beyond the Bookstore" fame, proved to be a continuous "Johnny on the Spot," with relevant anecdotes from his involvement with the Connecticut Area Publishers Association. Similarly, Paulette Ensign, the "Booklet Queen" and vice president of Publishers & Writers of San Diego, shared examples of many of the concepts we would be discussing over the next days.

Doris Baker inspired us all with samples of the printed member catalog and the program/catalog from the annual book awards sponsored by her organization, the Colorado Independent Publishers Association.

How CIPA has managed to build itself into a vital group more than 300 members strong is an amazing story of energy, enthusiasm and a lot of just plain hard work that has truly paid off in spades for its members. Bill Fessler of neighboring Arizona Book Publishers Association also shared the tremendous commitment of his group, which is spread out over an area larger than ours. ABPA members live in the sprawling southwest state, and some of them drive three hours to attend meetings of their fellow publishers.

Marv Mitchell shared strategies for success used by the North West Association of Book Publishers, while Jack Crowl explained how he and his compatriots from the Independent Publishers of the North East overcome the challenges of rugged terrain and frequent bad weather to still connect with each other on a regular basis. Sue Sylvia lent considerable experience to the discussion, sharing strategies used by her successful affiliate, the St. Louis Publishers Association.

Frank Gromling, another FPA member, gave a great presentation on the importance of communication. Bob Goodman, a colleague of Paulette's, not only added detail to some of her stories, but also brought his experience as a PMA board member to the discussion. And Nancy Stewart, another PMA board member, gave a brief presentation on working with Ingram, her employer, for book distribution.

This understanding and delightful group made it easy for me to share the struggles MBPA has experienced. Their enthusiasm and generosity gave me an injection of confidence that we can take this group wherever we want to go, if we can get enough members interested and involved. I truly believe we can.

We spent the next couple hours brainstorming concerns and issues for discussion and creating the agenda for the following day's in-depth roundtable. Then we examined the PMA/affiliate relationship in a frank and interesting discussion of what our

continued on page 8

It's that time of year again: Get ready for the book awards competitions

2008 Beach Book Festival

Entry Deadline April 25, 2008
Recognition ceremony May 3, 2008

The 2008 Beach Book Festival will consider self-published or independent publisher non-fiction, fiction, biography/autobiography, children's books, teenage, how-to, science fiction, romance, comics, poetry, spiritual, compilations/anthologies, history, business and health-oriented books published on or after Jan. 1, 2000.

Submitted works will be judged for general excellence, i.e., the potential of the work to be an engaging beach read this summer season. More information on the festival and entry forms are at www.beachbookfestival.com.

All entries must be postmarked by April 25, 2008 to be eligible for the prize package honoring "the hottest reads of the summer season." Top prize-winners will be honored on Saturday, May 3, 2008 at the Atlantic City Hilton.

The top festival book of the upcoming season will win a week for two at the fabulous Larimar St. Croix, a writing retreat in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The winner has the option of a week-long stay at the villa or participation in one of its intensive four-day workshops featuring top writing instructors from the TV, film and book publishing industries. More information and pictures are at www.larimarstcroix.com.

In addition to the writer's retreat vacation, the grand prize includes \$1500 cash, a flight to Atlantic City for the awards program and a publicity campaign from Tracey Miller Associates, a leading international PR firm, following the competition. The total prize package is now worth over \$10,000 in cash and services.

The 2008 Beach Book Festival is part of the JM Northern Media family of festivals, which includes the New York Book Festival, Hollywood Book Festival, London Book Festival and DIY Convention. The 2008 Beach Book Festival is sponsored by The Hollywood

Creative Directory; Larimar St. Croix Writer's Retreat; Westside Websites.com; Shopanista; eDivvy and The DIY Reporter.com.



The Washington Book Publishers' 2008 Book Design & Effectiveness Award Competition

Entry Deadline April 25, 2008; fees must be received by May 2, 2008
Reception & ceremony early June

Join your colleagues at a celebration of books. Enter the only design competition devoted to book publishing in the Washington-Baltimore region.

Now in its 23rd year, the Book Design and Effectiveness Awards competition recognizes, celebrates, and encourages excellence in bookmaking across the greater Washington, D.C., book publishing community. The competition's judges evaluate the excellence of each book's design and effectiveness in achieving the publisher's goals, meeting the readers' needs, and reaching its market. Prizes are awarded in 15 categories—five designs for each of three publisher categories—plus Best of Show.

Think you don't have anything to submit? Think again! Whether you do one book a year or fifty...on a big budget or a shoestring...you'll find a place for your books among the 15 categories in the premier book design competition open to local book publishers.

To learn about qualifying books, categories, and how to enter, go to WBP online at www.washingtonbooks.org and follow the links.

Winners will be announced and the awards will be presented at a reception and ceremony in early June. The gala event will feature an interactive forum with the judges, the designers and editors of winning entries, and the audience. All books submitted to the

competition will be on display, with winning entries featured prominently. After the ceremony, books entered in the competition will be donated to the District of Columbia Public Library.



The Mom's Choice Awards®

The Mom's Choice Awards® is an annual awards competition that recognizes authors, inventors, companies, parents and others for their efforts in creating quality, family-friendly media products and services. Products and services bearing the MCA seal help parents, caregivers, educators and retailers select quality materials and products for children and families.

An esteemed panel of judges includes education, media and other experts as well as parents, children, librarians, performing artists, producers, medical and business professionals, authors, scientists and others.

The MCA judges are bound by a strict code of ethics that ensures expert and objective analysis free from any manufacturer association. The evaluation process uses a propriety methodology in which entries are scored on a number of elements including production quality, design, educational value, entertainment value, originality, appeal and cost. Judges are especially interested in products that promote goodwill, encourage acceptance, warm the heart and lift the spirit.

Parents, educators, retailers and the media trust the Mom's Choice Awards® for product reviews and evaluations.

For complete details, please visit us on the web at <http://www.momschoiceawards.com/enter.php#guidelines>.

Robin Eldredge
Mom's Choice Awards®
725 Watch Island Reach
Chesapeake, VA 23320
757.410.9409 x709
757.410.9409 Fax
reldredge@momschoiceawards.com
www.momschoiceawards.com

Upcoming Events

Events galore, all in store; Spring and fall, try 'em all!

MBPA members have lots of upcoming events to look forward to in our region. Though at this point, there's probably only time to participate in the spring dates as attendees, you still have lots of time to prepare for the fall.

We're getting our ducks in a row to put out a much more regular and timely newsletter for future issues, which should allow plenty of time for our members to learn about fall dates while there's plenty of time to become exhibitors, as well.

Spring Events

Bethesda Literary Festival

April 18-20, 2008
Bethesda, Maryland
http://www.bethesda.org/special_events/litfest/litfest.htm

City Lit Festival

April 19, 2008, 10 am - 5 pm
Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, MD
<http://www.citylitproject.org/>

Kensington International Day of the Book

April 27, 2008, 12 - 5pm
Howard Avenue
Old Town Kensington, MD
<http://www.dayofthebook.com/>

Pennsylvania School Library Association Conference

May 1-3, 2008
Hershey Lodge and Convention Center
Hershey, PA
<http://www.psla.org/conferences/conferences.php4>

Maryland Library Association Conference

May 14-16, 2008
Ocean City, MD
<http://www.mdlib.org/conference/default.asp>

Philadelphia Book Festival

May 17 & 18, 2008
Philadelphia, PA
<http://libwww.freelibrary.org/bookfestival/>

PMA Publishing University

May 27-29, 2008
Los Angeles, CA
<http://www.pma-online.org/pmau/2008/template.aspx>

Book Expo America

May 29 - June 1, 2008
Los Angeles, CA
<http://www.bookexpoamerica.com/>

American Library Association Annual Conference

June 26-July 2, 2008
Anaheim, CA
http://www.ala.org/ala/eventsand_conferencesb/annual/2008a/home.cfm

Fall Events

NAIBA Fall Conference

Sept. 21-22, 2008
Crowne Plaza Hotel
Cherry Hill, NJ

The second annual NAIBA Fall Conference will focus on helping booksellers market the books they've already ordered. And if they haven't ordered your books, or enough of them, your enthusiasm and clever promotional ideas will help them see the error of their ways.

The conference begins on Saturday, Sept. 20 with an Early Bird Supper (featuring two authors), followed by the Quiz Bowl. Sunday, Sept. 21 is a full day of education and author events, as well as exhibit hall move-in.

The exhibit will open on Sunday evening with a reception from 6-7:30 pm, and then be open on Monday, Sept. 22 from 9:30 am - 4 pm, with no other programming to compete with your efforts.

Let your publicity departments know the producers are looking for authors for:

- Saturday night dinner (2 authors)
- Sunday Movable Luncheon (18 authors)
- Sunday afternoon Reading Room (3 authors)
- Sunday night post-banquet reception (12 authors). Email your sug-

gestions (author name/title/bio and publisher contact information) to readingent@aol.com. The author committee will meet on April 14 to review suggestions.

There is a little more space this year, so NAIBA will not be limiting the number of tables publishers can rent. To be fair to last year's exhibitors, they ask that you commit to space by June 1, before a price increase of \$50 per table. At that time, booth assignments will open up to other publishers who have expressed interest in exhibiting at the NAIBA Conference.


Sunday's publishers' Pick of the Lists will run from 10:45



am - 12:15 pm. There will be a \$50 charge per publisher/rep group presenting at the Pick of the Lists. Once again, children's books and adult titles will be presented in different rooms. If you have any questions, please call 516-333-0681.

NAIBA Advertising Opportunities

NAIBA is in constant contact with booksellers through print and online newsletters, conference journal and event mailings. If you would like to use one of these communiqués to reach booksellers, please refer to the ad rate sheet on NAIBA's website for pricing and deadlines. Their mailing lists can also be purchased for one-time use.

NAIBA is participating with the other regional booksellers associations in an online "Creative Marketing Alert," which is sent out monthly to our respective online newsletter subscribers. A sample of the first two "Alerts" were sent to you, but if you missed it, go to <http://www.sibaweb.com/creativeb.html> and see what other publishers are offering booksellers. If you would like to include your publisher's marketing materials in future "Alerts" please send your information to alert@sibaweb.com. 

The Seven Deadly Sins of Book Promotion

by Dan Smith

Competitive doesn't begin to describe today's book market. The booming print-on-demand and self-publishing industries, coupled with mainstream publishers, has flooded the market with thousands of new releases each month.

"The LA Times receives 600 to 700 books for review each week," reports Steve Wasserman, book review editor (<http://parapublishing.com/sites/para/resources/statistics.cfm>).

With an infinite number of books and authors vying for attention from a finite number of media outlets—and the trend of newspapers cutting back on space for book reviews—book publicity is a tough, sometimes brutal business.

While some authors choose to self-promote, and a lucky few have full support from their publishers, most authors reach out to professionals for help with at least some aspects of their promotion. For both novice authors and veteran authors alike, the pitfalls of book publicity are many.

In my experience handling over 250 campaigns, I know what can sabotage success, the errors of both omission and commission that can derail a campaign, and how human tendencies can adversely affect promotion and—yes, ultimately—book sales.

What follows are the Seven Deadly Sins of Book Promotion; the mistakes and actions that can destroy an author's chances to get substantial media coverage, and how to avoid these common pitfalls.

1. Sloth

If you think sitting back and watching royalty checks roll in is your destiny, think again. Virtually all authors must "get out there" and be seen and heard. Book signings and tours are not passive events. They require a hunger for success and a kinetic energy level. Interviews can be a gold mine, but they can also be a disaster for one who puts forth a half-hearted effort. Publicity doesn't just happen, you have to make it happen.

When an author is not only

aggressive, but willing to put his or her time in a campaign, we publicists are better able to build their exposure and gain consistent local, regional and nationwide coverage.

One example is a financial client who has been with us two years. His platform only touches on the topic of hedge funds. However, when hedge fund controversy hit the news, we suggested he send us information – and he quickly responded – for us to use in writing a current and biting feature release. The result: national coverage, including reporters calling from the Wall Street Journal and other top financial publications. Because of his willingness to stay current and our monitoring of his market and creation of relevant feature tips for reporters and editors, this author is regularly called by top financial media for expert commentary. His name and his projects benefit from this consistent, credible exposure.

Lazy authors languish in the million rankings on bookselling sites.

2. Pride

If you are promoting a book, prepare for your pride to be pierced a few times. One of the most common mistakes I've seen authors make is letting a negative review or bad interview derail their determination.

The author believes his book is a bestseller; it is his baby, his labor of love. He has great pride in what he has written, so much so that it has created an excessive belief in his abilities and his book. After all – his relatives and friends love it. When the tough times come, pride begets anger, which begets frustration, which leads to disillusionment.

Authors must go into promotion knowing not everyone will fall in love with their work. I often ask my clients, "Do you like every book you've ever read?"

Roll with the punches, and stay the course. Put your ego on bed rest.

3. Envy

Eight out of ten authors who call me inquiring about publicity tell me

they want to be on Oprah. Invariably, I tell them that it's probably not going to happen for them; that we can and should try, but the odds are akin to the lottery. But authors see others on the show and are envious. They ask, "If that author is on, why can't I be?" or "My book is better than hers!"

Envy serves no purpose in book promotion. The only way other authors get great publicity gigs is because they try. If anything, you should learn from them. Watch successful authors carefully, examine their topic, and then examine your own project. We all can learn something from others; I still do, every day.

We helped a self-published, first-time novelist promote her work on vampires. A difficult project? Yes. Impossible? No. Were we able to get her on Oprah? No. Have we been able to tap into the significant sub-world of vampire buffs? Absolutely. For eight months, we were able to generate consistent and targeted media coverage. Oprah, while a goldmine for any author, is unfortunately not a realistic goal for most.

4. Lust

How does lust come into play with book promotion? I have both an extreme example and more common ones from my firm's own case files.

Good publicity can be intoxicating. Appearing on talk shows, reading articles written about you...it all makes you feel good, and it should. I always tell authors to enjoy the ride, because it won't last forever. However, letting your good time change you, (or bring about actions which have nothing to do with the hard work of promoting your book) can be disastrous. Losing focus – taking your eye off the ball – is a surefire way to run into trouble.

Example #1: During the first conversations with a prospective client – a middle-aged author with multiple books – he asked me (and I must paraphrase here) if the publicity generated would "attract" women. He was serious. Needless to say, his campaign lasted only one month. We tried to keep him focused on the steps

continued on page 7

needed to get exposure for his books, but we couldn't, and we parted company.

Example #2: The more benign type of book promotion "lust" comes in the form of letting success change who you are, and making you long for things that you never envisioned before. In our firm, we call these clients "addicts."

They become so enthralled with success that the book becomes secondary. They seek more and more exposure, but not so much to sell books, but to feed their own newly found lust for fame, popularity and the overwhelming desire to have others simply notice them.

In the end, lust almost always makes for an unhappy ending to what can be a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

5. Gluttony

Gluttony in book promotion touches upon several of the other sins. In its purest form, it is the insatiable desire to "consume" as much publicity as possible, and not being satisfied with each opportunity.

Local radio interviews, for example, become unsatisfying, and an author starts to shun them because she wants more and bigger opportunities. A book review in a small newspaper is dismissed as insignificant, because she wants bigger newspapers. A local TV opportunity is declined because there aren't enough viewers to fulfill the need for exposure.

When I run into these scenarios, the campaign starts to slowly dissolve because the author is literally never satisfied, and will not appreciate "smaller bites" of publicity while the bigger opportunities are pursued.

Book promotion is like a seven-course meal. You start slowly, testing the waters, then move onto the next course. You proceed in a steady, measured manner, enjoying every course while building experience, confidence, momentum and sales.

Don't demand all seven courses be delivered to your publicity table at

once. Enjoy the entire experience of the meal and be patient.

6. Greed

Like gluttony, greed is the offspring of several other sins, and perhaps the most common sin of book promotion. Here is a classic example:

An unknown, first-time author comes to my firm. He is nervous, unsure and wary of what will happen in his campaign; all perfectly understandable and expected concerns. The campaign begins slowly, and a few radio interviews are secured. All is well.

The campaign starts to achieve momentum. The radio interviews start streaming in. Instead of one a week, we are booking four and five a week.

Our client has confidence now, and is thoroughly enjoying the process, as he should.

Things start to change. The level of radio interviews takes a dip, and we encounter "the lull," which happens in most campaigns. Instead of four or five interviews a week, it drops to one or two.

The author, having become accustomed to many interviews each week, demands more. He is not satisfied with the interviews we secure, and will not be satisfied until we reach and exceed the number of interviews we had achieved.

He becomes disillusioned and decides another firm can fulfill his hunger for more and more interviews.

When clients truly understand the nature of publicity, they are able to roll with the busy times and slow times, knowing it is the cumulative efforts of the entire campaign that count. As a publicist, we gauge when the "party is over" for a particular angle, then work with the author to develop new and topical press materials with the goal of maintaining and improving media opportunities.

Greed is what I call a "coffin nail" in a campaign. Once it starts, it is very difficult to control and typically ends in a campaign that veers wildly off track. Greed may be good on

Wall Street, but it will bankrupt a book promotion campaign.

7. Anger

Anger comes in many forms in book publicity. I once worked with an author who received a brutal review of his book. He was so angry, he proceeded to drive more than 200 miles to the reviewer's location, storm into the office and scream at the reviewer. This was, putting it mildly, a bad move.

The reviewer reacted by contacting reviewers at other newspapers in his company's chain, and urged his colleagues to review the book. Five additional negative reviews appeared in the ensuing weeks.

It is important to keep in mind when promoting your book that you are opening yourself up to scrutiny. In fact, you are inviting it. You want the scrutiny and attention. Assuming everyone will react positively to you or your book is foolish and naive.

The same scenario happens in radio interviews. Many authors don't realize that "hostile" interviews can make for great talk radio, and actually get more listeners curious and interested in your book. If a host starts throwing punches at you on the air, throw yourself into the fight. Trust me, you will have a good time. When your juices get flowing, you will be more animated and colorful, listeners will love it and books will sell.

We are all Sinners

Book promotion is a distinctly human process. It is an emotional, scary, exciting and stimulating experience. Authors promoting a book will, at various times, experience both disappointment and excitement. All authors will also be tempted to "sin" at various times in a campaign. As a publicist, I expect this and understand it. Fortunately for us both, I am usually successful at coaxing our authors away from the "dark side."

Write For Your Audience

By Bobbie Hinman

As the book publishing world becomes increasingly competitive, it is more important than ever for authors and publishers to understand and address their target markets. In some genres, such as children's books, the person purchasing the book may not be the one who will be reading it. Have you addressed them both? Will your book attract them both?

It is very wise to share your ideas and first draft with the people in your subject area who you hope will be the ones to choose your book from a crowded bookstore shelf. I have spoken to several children's authors who said that they didn't share their ideas beforehand because they were actually afraid of the results. The thought of receiving negative comments was more than they could bear. All the more reason to do it!

One author told me that he didn't show his book to anyone because he wanted the story to be a surprise. He also said that he "just knew" that everyone would love it. Some authors find out too late that it isn't enough to simply feel sure that your audience will love your book.

While I was working on my first children's book, I organized several decidedly unorganized focus groups consisting of all of the children in my daughter's neighborhood. I can now tell you from experience that children are honest – maybe brutally so.

What did I learn? I learned that the ending to my book (an ending that I thought made perfect sense) didn't make sense to the ones who would be reading it. Luckily, these little Einsteins had wonderful ideas for what the ending should have been. I can now say with pride that the last line in the book was actually written by a seven-year-old.

A few revisions later, I read the book to the same group, this time receiving an enthusiastic "thumbs up." Several book awards later, I think they were right on target.

While working on my second book, I almost made the dreadful mistake of sending it to the illustrator with-

out doing my research. After all, I thought I now knew how to please children. I thank my lucky stars that I came to my senses and called my group together.

My story was a perky, rhyming account of the Button Fairy – you know, the one who is responsible for missing buttons. The children hated it! Why? Not one of the children in my group had ever lost a button. They didn't know what I was talking about. In fact, there were fourteen children in the



group, and not one of them even had a single button on their clothes. Zippers, yes. Velcro, yes. Buttons, no! My research had shown that, sadly (for me), the book will spend its life in my file cabinet and will probably never see the light of day. Better that, though, than a garage full of books I can't sell. Thank you, kids.

The message learned is simple: Do your research.

Find out what the audience you would like to capture is actually reading. Talk to bookstore employees. Be sure to also ask them what is NOT selling. Talk to librarians. What are the most popular books in your category? Check Amazon. What are their best-sellers? Find out what the people interested in your genre want to read. Find out what the bestselling books all have in common...then, make yours better.

Bobbie Hinman is the author of *The Knot Fairy* and the soon-to-be-released title, *The Sock Fairy*. Published by Best Fairy Books www.bestfairybooks.com.

Affiliate Retreat

continued from page 3


national organization does well, and how it could stand to improve.

The discussion continued on into dinner as we enjoyed the marvelous food at a nearby restaurant and hashed over the many challenges of being small publishers, and what we could expect to get out of—and to give to—our affiliate associations.

Thus fortified and bonded, we met again early on Friday to enjoy a nice breakfast and get to work on discussing all the topics we'd identified the day before. We began by discussing the challenges of building and maintaining membership. We covered recruiting, dues, retention and overcoming the challenges of having a geographically spread-out membership.

This is probably MBPA's single largest challenge to date, but we're not alone. I'd say more than half of the organizations represented at the retreat are struggling with the same issue, and most of them are dealing very successfully with it by taking a regional approach to in-person meetings, while maintaining everyday connections through e-mail, web-based discussion boards and listservs, teleconferencing and web-based videoconferencing. If I brought nothing else back from the event, this alone was worth the trip...but I definitely brought back more!

The rest of the day, participants shared how they deal with meetings—their structure, scheduling and technology used; event promotion and marketing; catalogs and newsletters; legal and liability issues; working with interns; regional book awards competitions; websites and related technology; alliances with other organizations; committees; leadership and transition; censorship; and financial viability.

All these topics were incredibly interesting, and the suggestions helpful. Most of all, the support and encouragement I received was tremendously energizing, and I can't wait to share it all with the rest of the MBPA board when we meet later this month. I just know there's a great future waiting for us to claim it! 

Marketing Opportunity

Atlantic Publishing Company: Final call for May 2008 Library Catalog Mailing

Publishers who want to sell books to libraries and bookstores at a low cost may want to consider participating in Atlantic Publishing Company's co-op mailing program.

Here's how it works: Atlantic Publishing, a nonfiction book publisher in Ocala, Florida, will mail its new catalog throughout 2008 to bookstores and targeted library lists. This catalog is enclosed in a clear poly bag that allows for other publishers to provide an insert, postcard, or other printed piece to ride along in the package at a cost of \$0.10 (ten cents) per piece for an insert or postcard. This fee includes postage, list rental, and all mail house costs.

In May and September. Mailings go to 20,000 public libraries and 5,000 college/technical libraries. In September only, a mailing goes out to 15,000 bookstores. No more than eight inserts are allowed per mailing.

April 14th is the deadline for signing up for all May mailings and most mailings have only 2 to 3 spaces left. September mailings are already filling up as well, so reserve your spot now for guaranteed inclusion. For more information, e-mail Angela Adams at aadams@atlantic-pub.com or call 352-622-1825 for complete details. ✉

Note: MBPA provides this notice as an informational service only. We are not affiliated with, nor do we endorse, any marketing opportunity identified in this newsletter. As always, caveat emptor.



President's Message

continued from page 1

Your MBPA Board of Directors will be meeting later this month to discuss some of these ideas, as well as our plans for the upcoming year. As in past years, we'll most likely host exhibits at the Baltimore Book Festival and the New Atlantic Independent Booksellers Association conference, but we'll also be discussing other ways we can help members market their books regionally.

One important topic we'll be discussing is how we can better facilitate communication between members, both online and through in-person meetings. Our large region—members are spread out over several states—makes scheduling in-person meetings a challenge, but we're determined to find a way to make it work. We're developing ways to provide educational opportunities for our members, either in conjunction with meetings or as a separate event. We're also evaluating member management software that will provide a better way for us to keep our membership rolls up to date and stay in touch with members on a more timely basis. Some candidate software we're looking at even functions as a portal for listserv discussions, sharing of member projects, events and successes, while making it convenient for members to manage their MBPA profiles and memberships online.

Your board members are all enthusiastic and optimistic about the

potential for these initiatives to re-invigorate our association. The bottom line is, though, that a vital, effective organization depends on the active interest and participation of you, the members.

The Board can make plans, but without member involvement, none of them can come to life. As we solidify our strategies for the year, I hope you will find ways to engage with the organization as an active member.

Watch for opportunities to attend meetings and participate in online discussions—nothing makes a group stronger than solid bonds formed directly among members.

Volunteer to help create the communications that keep us connected, like writing newsletter articles, newsletter editing and graphic design. Share your expertise and experience with fellow members by speaking at events—everyone has some valuable knowledge and experience to offer. Help us with event planning, so we can provide much-needed opportunities for our members to get their books and other products in front of buyers.

Be a part of the change you'd like to see in your publishers association! If you'd like to volunteer, or if you have any questions, concerns or ideas to share, please email me today at sruth@ImaginatorPress.com.

I'll look forward to sharing the excitement with you. ✍

Seven Deadlies

continued from page 7

As in life, recognizing the sins of publicity, and stopping them before they cause problems, is key. Book promotion is more a marathon than a sprint, and because of this, the opportunities to veer into negative promotional behaviors are many.

You can always atone for your sins by getting back on track, enjoying the ride, and realizing you are involved in a wonderful experience.

Dan Smith is the president of TCI-Smith publicity, a full service book promotion and public relations agency with offices in New Jersey, New York, and London. He has personally conducted more than 250 promotional campaigns. Clients of TCI-Smith Publicity have appeared on virtually every major radio and television show, and been featured in top publications across the country. www.smithpublicity.com.

Vendor Profile: FIRST NATIONAL MERCHANT SOLUTIONS

This is the second article in an ongoing segment profiling local or other recommended vendors. We hope you will find this information useful, and we encourage you to submit your own profiles of local vendors with whom you have worked recently. Please send your articles to Sheila Ruth, sruth@imaginatpress.com.

When I first realized I'd need to accept credit cards, it was because I was doing a lot of personal appearances and trade show-type events like street fairs. I knew zilch about working with merchant processors, but I knew a few things I didn't need. I didn't need an electronic web interface, because I was doing just fine with PayPal, thank you very much. I didn't need a terminal because most of my direct sales that weren't made in person came in over the phone, and when I was out, I was rarely anywhere that I could plug in a terminal (unless I wanted to pay more for electrical access, which I didn't). What I needed was a phone-in system for authorization and card verification, preferably one that handled both functions together.

I won't discuss the first vendor I used. I found them on the Web, and since I was such a newb, they just saw me coming. I was with them for less than a year before finding another provider whose charges were much lower and they didn't make me sign a contract.

Problem is, they were oh-so-helpful until I signed their contract. Then the customer service just disappeared, and the hidden charges started mounting up. I had thought I'd read my contract carefully and asked all the right questions, but the fact is you can't ask about something you're not aware of. Long story short, I ended up paying a \$25 minimum service fee every month, whether I made sales or not, plus a not-small transaction fee on every sale. I was routinely getting monthly bills around \$35, which means I had to sell three copies of my book just to break even.

Then someone suggested I make use of my PMA membership to check their approved vendor list. I'd like to say it was one of those "Aha!" moments, but it was more like, "Duh! Why didn't I think of that?" Quickly, I did just that, and immediately found First National Merchant Solutions on the PMA website. I called, and was fortunate to have representative Daniel Dunn assigned to my account.

Not only did I not have to sign any contract, I was hand-held through the entire application process, and it's easy to upgrade your account as you grow. I told Daniel I needed to switch quickly because I had a show coming up, and he made it happen in less than 24 hours. My account was open, I called in to do my setup, and he made sure Discover and AmEx got hold of me to run my test transactions through.

He didn't pressure me to sign up for services I didn't need or want. He followed through with sending my welcome kit (yes, a real welcome kit, that actually explains the service and gives you all the paperwork you need!), and that was followed by a call from a First National customer service rep who walked me through a sample phone processing transaction. She also thoroughly explained the the printed user guide/cheat sheet.

Best of all, the charges are minimal – about a third of what I used to pay, with a VERY low monthly service charge and no minimum transaction fee. And on top of all that, Daniel asked me for referrals, and when I gave one that resulted in more business for him, my account was credited \$100 within a week! If you want to get a good deal while gaining a quality service vendor, click on their current "We'll pay you \$500 if we can't save you money" promotion on their website at <http://www.firstnationalmerchants.com>. Then call Daniel Dunn at 800-516-6242 x4295.

Mary Shafer, Word Forge Books • publisher@wordforgebooks.com



First National Merchant Solutions • 1620 Dodge Street, Stop 8155 • Omaha, NE 68197 • 800.516.6242

About Your Association

MBPA Mission Statement



The MidAtlantic Book Publishers Association is a community of independent publishers located in the Mid-Atlantic area. We welcome all independent and self-publishers in Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and Washington, DC.

MBPA is a regional affiliate of PMA, The Independent Book Publishers Association. We offer networking opportunities, education, cooperative marketing programs such as participation in the Baltimore Book Festival, and more. MBPA members can also join PMA at a discount from the regular price of membership, and are eligible for other benefits from PMA.

WRITE TO MBPA
c/o Sheila Ruth, President
Imaginator Press
6400 Baltimore Nat'l Pike #194
Baltimore, MD 21228

—
Board of Directors
Sheila Ruth, President
Jennifer Stein, Secretary
Donna Wessel, Treasurer
Mary Shafer
Shelley Wilks Geehr