Class “A” Marketing
by Brian Gahran

A wise woman once said, “It is better to have a Class A marketer with a Class B product, than the other way ‘round.” At the March meeting, Karla Olson demonstrated the wisdom of this adage by sharing her marketing expertise, drawn from more than 20 years in book publishing.

Karla is a book shepherd and the co-founder of BookStudio, a publishing consultancy that advises clients on developing book proposals and marketing plans.

Getting a book profitably published can be challenging even for veterans. The most critical activity, Karla told the group of more than 60 people, is developing a sound book proposal and a detailed marketing plan before your book has been written. Assuming you have the competence and the ability to produce a high-quality written product, this is where the art and science of marketing take over.

Producing a Sound Book Proposal
Writing a book can be a humbling experience, but writing is only half the battle; the other half is getting the book published and to market. The secret to successfully...
marketing your book lies in doing your homework up front. To do this effectively, you need to research and answer several key questions:

1. Who are my readers?
2. What do they want to hear from me?
3. How do they want to get it from me?
4. Why should they listen to me?
5. When will they listen to me?

The bottom line is to remove yourself from the equation (and the emotion), and put the reader in the driver’s seat. The information you uncover will be the basis of your marketing plan.

Key Resources

Here are some (but not all) resources you can use to learn about your audience:

Demographics: The publisher wants access to people in your market and is looking for you to determine what will drive people into book stores to buy your book. You need to research a wide range of customer demographics such as age, income level, personal and spending habits, where they gather, and how they relate. For non-fiction works, industry studies can be valuable sources of quality information.

Magazines: If possible, review a full year of issues. Look at the advertising, read the columnists, dig into the masthead (people list) and find out who writes for the publication. Call the advertising department and ask for a media kit or look on the website in the fine print at the bottom. When a rep calls, explain your interest and follow up on any connections or referrals.

Internet: Study websites your readers visit for both content and layout. Read and immerse yourself in the subject matter and learn the connections within the companies and the industry. Be sure to visit all featured website links.

Amazon Books (the Big Gorilla): Look up books similar to yours. Check out “My Favorites” lists and note the composition of any “Buy X, Get Y” combos in your genre.

Stores: Pay attention to how things are moved around within a store over time. Peruse the appropriate category for your book and position your book against the current offerings in the store. Determine how best to package and present your book so that it will sell.

Competition: It is critical that you study your competitors. Pick out the top three books and find out what makes them successful. Find out how many times a book is mentioned (Google Alert). An Amazon sales ranking of less than 100,000 is very good.

Other: To find groups that are interested in your topic, visit www.meetup.com or Google “book lovers.” Follow the types of activities that your audience attends.

Once you have your research data, you are ready to begin writing your marketing plan (the plan is a part of the book proposal).

Producing a Detailed Marketing Plan

Karla provided a template for creating a book marketing plan. The introduction features your book title, contact information, and your biography. If your book is non-fiction, reference your expertise in the field; if your book is fiction, list your previously published works.

Next are the book’s premise (5 to 10 bullets that highlight compelling features), the benefits to readers, and the market overview (description of 3 targeted yet varied markets for the book). The marketing strategy may include testimonials and endorsements, pre- or post-publication reviews, articles, and interviews, author tours, website info, strategic alliances, book signings, and distribution outlets.

Responding to questions from the audience, Karla added some practical tips.

• If you are seeking publication, you need to have a website.
• Start your marketing process 4-5 months prior to publication (pre-publication inputs are due 4 months before press date).
• Your galley, or rough draft, should not have a “too finished” look.
• Look for endorsements that connect to the intended readers.
Why Volunteering for PWSD Is a Win-Win

—PWSD member Gerry Rose, www.integritysd.com

One of the best ways to network is to volunteer for PWSD. By volunteering, we are exposed to many new people and opportunities. Through our involvement in the community, we are exposed to people who may very well turn into strategic allies.

What does it mean to volunteer? Webster says, "Volunteer: A person who enters into any service of his own free will." Does that say it all? You bet it does!

At the same time, this definition says nothing about follow-through—what we say we will do. Don’t volunteer unless you follow through, because your commitment as a volunteer is viewed by others as indicative of your commitment to business. Organizations often accept that volunteers may or may not show up, or may or may not do what they promised. "We are only volunteers. We are not being paid for our service." Agree or disagree, this is commonplace.

However, professionals commit to volunteer responsibly, then perform reliably because they understand that volunteering responsibly leads to a positive reputation in the community.

I often hear people ask, "Can we rely on volunteers to deliver all that they promise?" The surprising answer is yes, especially when the volunteers understand that the job they do is a reflection on their professionalism. This creates instant credibility among the members of the group, which leads to referrals and recommendations. So if you want to be recognized quickly, volunteer to do the things that no one else will do, and do them well. Take the plunge. Jump in and volunteer with both feet pumping. Both you and PWSD will benefit.
MY GOODNESS, MY KIDS: Cultivating Decency in a Dangerous World

Kids who are raised to be good—above and beyond any other characteristic—mature into adults who display honor and integrity in their daily lives. Children who value goodness don't cheat on a test to get into the college of their choice. They don't steal candy from the grocery or grow into adults who steal office supplies from the workplace. They treat others with respect and kindness, and they don't hurt innocent people through violence, manipulation, or cruelty. Through thought-provoking theories and practical, empowering techniques, readers will learn how:

• No curfew for teenagers can build trust and respect—and get your kids home earlier than expected.
• Not paying for grades can teach children to love learning—for the pure joy of it.
• Asking children to design their punishment can increase harmony in the home and teach consequences of actions.
• Telling your child "I'm sorry" can heal a family hurt and promote unity.

Order: 1-760.729.7222, or go to www.GrassrootsPublishingGroup.com

Events of Interest

Tuesday, April 17, 2008, 5:30 p.m.
Carolyn Howard-Johnson will share secrets for turning bookfair signings from hum-drum to sizzling success.
Location: Sportsmen’s Lodge, 12825 Ventura Blvd., Studio City.
Mixer and program, $10. Dinner, $35.
Reservations: irwinzuckerpr@aol.com

Friday-Sunday, April 18-20, 2008, All Day
Friends of the Coronado Public Library Spring Book Fair. Over 65,000 books, including collectibles. All proceeds to support the library.
Location: 6th & Orange, Coronado.
Information: 619-435-0290 or folcoronado@hotmail.com.

Wednesday, April 23, 2008, 5:00 p.m.
Teleseminar: Book Promotion for Reluctant Marketers, with coaches Dan Poynter and Judy Cullins. $45.00 for 85 minutes with free reports included.
Transcript: http://www.bookcoaching.com

Tuesday-Thursday, April 22-24
Florida Publishers Association is accepting submissions of books and other products for display at the Florida Library Association convention. Open to nonmember publishers, self-publishers and authors.
Location: Trade Winds Island Resort, St. Petersburg.
Info: http://www.flbookpub.org/FLA%20display%202008.pdf

Friday, April 25, 2008
Info: http://www.beachbookfestival.com or 323.665.8080

Saturday-Sunday, April 26-27, All Day
Los Angeles Times Festival of Books. Huge annual event, includes 28th LA Times Book Prize awards, as well as performances, entertainment, celebrities, and events.
Location: UCLA area

Saturday, April 26, 2008, 1:00 p.m.
Turning Your Life’s Stories into a Literary Memoir. San Diego's leading memoir specialists and authors Bob Goodman (PWSD member, Silvercat Communications Services) and Peggy Lang will share insights into what makes a good memoir. Free.
Location: Oceanside Public Library

Monday, April 28, 2008, 6:30 p.m.
San Diego Writers & Editors Guild Meeting
Speaker is Linda Griffin, Fiction Collection Librarian and author.
Location: Joyce Beers Community Center, Hillcrest
Info: www.SDWritersGuild.org

Sunday, May 4, 2008, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
First Annual Children’s Book Festival
Location: New North San Diego Library (La Jolla)
Info: 619.421.9094

Tuesday-Thursday, May 27-29, 2008
PMA-University. This year’s theme is Creative Strategies for Growth, Profit and Success. Don’t miss this chance to attend on the West Coast. BookExpo America follows, May 29-June 1.
Location: Grand Wilshire Hotel, Los Angeles.
Info: www.thepublishinguniversity.com

October 13-19, 2008
Muse Online Writers Conference
Carolyn Howard-Johnson co-hosts. Over 120 workshops. Applications accepted for being a presenter.
Info: www.freewebs.com/themuseonlinewritersconference
Why You Should Take Digital Publishing Seriously
by Julie Shapiro

The book publishing world is a hard business. I know 50 outstanding writers who don’t stand a chance of getting published by the mainstream industry, and of this group each writer in turn probably knows another 50, so we’re looking at 2,500 writers with books that under regular circumstances wouldn’t stand a chance of making it. But the good news is there’s a whole world of opportunities opening up in the digital publishing arena. Before I go into that I want to tell you the typical cycle from writer to literary agent to mainstream publishing house.

Mainstream Publishing Cycles
The average literary agent gets 150 queries a day from writers, and chooses to represent roughly 1% of these. Agents pitch the books to publishers, who get thousands of manuscripts a year to review. An editorial committee at the publishing house then decides what books to take, but that’s not the end of the cycle. The committee still has to convince marketing that the book will earn back its royalties and advances. One ‘naysayer’ at a publishing house can kill the book’s chances of getting published. Novels by the established, the well known, the trendy and the celebrities with ghost writers have a greater chance of being published than many talented writers.

The Digital Alternative
Fortunately, digital publishing has potential to revolutionize publishing. Digital format means every word, image, sound, animation, and movie can be delivered as a series of digital information, and this means digital publishing has changed our definition of books. Today digital publishing encompasses ebooks, CD-ROMs, and books with Internet links.

Print on demand also uses digital technology. It’s cost effective for small runs, and has been adopted by independent and small presses. What digital publishing has done for the book world is to level the playing field and give independent presses a chance to publish the kinds of books they want. More importantly it gives readers a chance to read books beyond what the mega-corporations publishing houses are choosing to produce.

Most mainstream publishers go with what’s safe and proven to make money. It’s less about art and more about dollars. This is where small digital presses have a chance to offer readers something different and to in turn give new generations of talented writers a chance.

Yes, talent, that’s what you’ll find in the digital realm in my not so humble opinion. It’s fast becoming a home for bold fiction that’s not afraid to take chances—much like independent film-making. As more and more writers are shut out by the mainstream publishing conglomerates, they will have no choice but to seek out these other avenues.

Digital Books Are “Real” Books—Aren’t They?
Some may equate digital publishing to self-publishing. But while it’s true that anyone can publish something digitally, it doesn’t mean that by association digital book publishers are not respectable—there are plenty of well-respected independent publishers such as Double Dragon Press, Zumaya, Mundania Press, SynergyEbooks, New Concepts Publishing, Boson Books, C & M Online, Samhain Publishing, Echelon Press, Silk’s Vault and countless others who choose to offer books digitally. Not to mention the major distribution channels established for ebooks, including Fictionwise and Mobipocket.

Even mainstream publishers recognize the dynamic medium that digital books offer; they now have ebook divisions and are seeking to capitalize on the vast Internet audience, the massive numbers of people using PDAs and other mobile devices that support ebook readers. Last fall, Harlequin announced that 40% of its new titles would be issued as ebooks. Amazon.com’s Kindle is an electronic book reader that can wirelessly connect to an ebook store on Amazon’s site. This is a significant advance over older e-book devices, which must be connected to a computer to download books or articles. Google also plans to start charging users for digital copies of books in their database.

Despite these two major Internet leaders’ activities in the digital publishing market, however, legions of consumers still don’t view digital books as “real” books. Many consumers in turn hesitate to purchase ebooks even though they are much cheaper than their paperback counterparts and even save trees. And many traditional book reviewers will not consider reviewing a digital book. The authors of ebooks and digital print on demand books and even e-publishers at times feel like Rodney Dangerfield uttering his famous refrain, “I don’t get no respect.”

It’s time to recognize digital books as real books and applaud digital publishers for giving talented authors a chance. Let’s recognize that they are entrepreneurs carving out a niche in a difficult market. After all, thousands of very good books are turned down by the mainstream publishers every year for the basic reason that they are not commercial enough.

If you love books, support a digital literary writer by reading and reviewing their books. Good books deserve to be read. This is your literary future, your legacy.
Correction to Drivetime Yoga URL

The URL for Elaine Master’s Drivetime Yoga website was printed incorrectly in the PW Monthly. Apologies from the Editor.

The correct web address is:

www.DrivetimeYoga.com
Brian Jud Seeks to Buy Two Books

Brian Jud is working with a rep group specializing in selling large-quantity books as premiums to non-bookstore, non-retail buyers. Right now he needs the following items:

1. A book associated with the Olympics—not necessarily this year’s Olympics. Initial order is 15,000.
2. A coffee table book in the $50 price range on “Americana,” a photographic celebration of the US. Quantity 10,000.

If you have books in either category ready to sell, send URLs to Brian at brianjud@comcast.net.

Mom’s Choice Awards

The Mom’s Choice Award is an annual competition that recognizes authors, inventors, companies, parents and others for their efforts in creating quality family-friendly media products and services. Judges are especially interested in products that promote good will, encourage acceptance, warm the heart and lift the spirit. For complete details, visit www.momschoiceawards.com.

The Word Tripper

Disparity, discrepancy - “Disparity” means being unequal, as in age, rank, degree. “Discrepancy” refers to being different, inconsistent. “You can narrow the economic disparities among regions, but first address the discrepancies in perceptions about them.”

From The Door Opener newsletter, www.BarbaraMcNichol.com

Dharlene Fahl-Brittian Signed by Agent

Martin Literary Management has signed Darlene and will represent her trilogy, starting with the second book, Sacred Sipping. You will find her listed under Client Offerings>Ginny Weissman’s Offerings at www.martinliterarymanagement.com. She says Ginny’s bio is worth reading as well.

Dharlene is an author, inspirational speaker and tea specialist. She met Ginny by “chance” just in time to catch her book before it was printed. “Duh,” says Dharlene. “Now I have to write a book proposal!”

www.takeupthecup.com

Ed. note: Read the amazing full story on the PWSD website at www.publisherswriters.org.

Closing Date for the next issue of PW Monthly is May 5th!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Children’s Book Festival
Sunday, May 4, 10:00 to 4:00
La Jolla Public Library
Contact PWSD Member Carl Nelson
619.421.9094 or cannelson56@cox.net

My book DriveTime Yoga has been accepted in Baker & Taylor’s Wholesale program through my PMA membership.

Having a wholesaler is going to open doors to bookstores, larger retailers and other niche markets that have been hesitant to order through me directly.

I have PWSD to thank for prompting me to join PMA!

Elaine Masters

My book DriveTime Yoga has been accepted in Baker & Taylor’s Wholesale program through my PMA membership.

Having a wholesaler is going to open doors to bookstores, larger retailers and other niche markets that have been hesitant to order through me directly.

I have PWSD to thank for prompting me to join PMA!

Elaine Masters

Ed. note: Read the amazing full story on the PWSD website at www.publisherswriters.org.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Children’s Book Festival
Sunday, May 4, 10:00 to 4:00
La Jolla Public Library
Contact PWSD Member Carl Nelson
619.421.9094 or cannelson56@cox.net

My book DriveTime Yoga has been accepted in Baker & Taylor’s Wholesale program through my PMA membership.

Having a wholesaler is going to open doors to bookstores, larger retailers and other niche markets that have been hesitant to order through me directly.

I have PWSD to thank for prompting me to join PMA!

Elaine Masters

Ed. note: Read the amazing full story on the PWSD website at www.publisherswriters.org.
Q&A

Tim Barger
www.selwapress.com

How did you become a publisher of books about early Saudi Arabia?

My father was one of the earliest American geologists in Saudi Arabia—I was born in Dhahran 10 years later. In the early ’80s, I helped him with a manuscript about his first three years, titled it Out in the Blue: Letters from Arabia 1937-1940. After he passed away in 1984 I discovered hundreds of photographs that depicted this now lost era and determined to one day use them in a book. For years I concentrated on my family and my video production business, but in the mid-90s I attended a seminar on self-publishing by Dan Poynter and realized that I actually could produce this book.

In 1999 I took some time off to make Out in the Blue. I learned Pagemaker and put it together, thinking that maybe a few hundred people might be interested. Through serendipity and good fortune the book became a best seller in Saudi Arabia—it sold over 5,000 copies at $35 each and Selwa Press was on its way. Since then I have published five other books on Arabia including my last effort, Wallace Stegner’s Discovery! The Search for Arabian Oil.

Wallace Stegner is a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, so how did you acquire the rights to his book?

In 1955 Stegner was respected but not well known. He was commissioned to write the story of Aramco, the Saudi oil company. It is a wonderful book told through the lives of the bigger-than-life characters—Saudi and American—who struggled together through cultural differences and against a harsh desert environment in a very remote place devoid of infrastructure and material support of any kind to find and produce oil. The original book was published in Lebanon in 1971 and then lapsed into obscurity. I knew about it, applied to Aramco for the right to reprint it for the first time in America, and nearly two years later published it.

Discovery! is your first book with national distribution. How did this come about? And how important is it to have a distributor like IPG?

My distributor IPG, the Independent Publishers Group, sponsors a program with PMA to select books for its Small Press catalog. With the help of PWSO officer Karla Olson, I submitted an application and marketing plan to IPG and was selected. And PWSO member Tricia Van Dockum did the publicity for Discovery!

IPG has placed Discovery! in bookstores and libraries nationwide. Without a major distributor it is very difficult, if not impossible, to garner book reviews in the major publications. Because of IPG and Tricia, the book was reviewed in Publishers Weekly, Library Journal, National Public Radio, Book TV and a dozen major newspapers.

What role has PWSO played in the success of your company?

Before I joined PWSO I was just a guy who printed books; with the group’s help and encouragement I’m now a true publisher. Andrew Chapman, Paulette Ensign and Bob Goodman have persevered over the years to make PWSO a dynamic group. Through the group, in addition to Karla and Tricia, I met eagle-eyed proofreader Carolyn Fox and talented designer Ellen Goodwin. Even more importantly I have connected with an entire community of publishing professionals—we are all in this together and it is a pleasure to be part of this association.

What are you working on now?

My latest project for release this fall is a book written by the eminent Middle East expert Thomas Lippman entitled Arabian Knight: Colonel Bill Eddy USMC and the Rise of American Power in the Middle East. Colonel Eddy was quite a remarkable American: World War I hero, scholar, spymaster in World War II and the diplomat who shaped the Saudi-US diplomatic relationship that endures to this day.
From the Editor

Closing date for the next issue is MAY 5.

Loved getting the contributions this month. Who wants to be in the Member Spotlight next month? Who has a new book to announce?

Krasna

PWSD MEETING APRIL 26, 2008, 10:30 A.M.
RED-HOT INTERNET PUBLICITY AND VIRTUAL AUTHOR TOURS
GUEST EXPERT: PENNY SANSEVIERI

If you think you have your Internet marketing covered with just a web site, you might be missing out on a bucket of Internet gold. This seminar is packed with exactly what you need to take advantage of the publicity opportunities the Internet offers. Best of all, Penny will discuss her exclusive Virtual Author Tour program—how you can "tour" yourself on the Internet—which has put several of her clients on the New York Times bestseller list. As a bonus, she’ll share hints on selling through craigslist.

Penny Sansevieri is CEO and founder of Author Marketing Experts, Inc., an internationally recognized book marketing and media relations firm. She is the author of five books, including Book to Bestseller, which has been called the "road map to publishing success." Read more at her website www.amarketingexpert.com

NEW LOCATION: ENCINITAS COMMUNITY LIBRARY

Sign Up Now: PMA-University Is Getting Close

Want to learn more about publishing or enhance your publishing company? Pack your knapsack and attend PMA-University, May 27-29, 2008, in at the Grand Wilshire Hotel, Los Angeles. This year’s theme is Creative Strategies for Growth, Profit and Success. Don’t miss this chance to attend on the West Coast.

Have you been before? Come again. We have full tracks for editorial, publishing, marketing, financial management, and even an advanced track for experienced publishers. And new this year are Internet courses on social media, blogs, and e-zines.

See the course catalog for more information, and register at www.thepublishinguniversity.com.

Best of all, PWSH is an affiliate of PMA, so members can receive a $50 discount for the event. Just enter AFF08 when you register.