Presenting
An Independent Study

Conducted by
Stephanie Selah

Learning How To
“Talk Books”

A Guide to the
Contemporary
Publishing Industry
April 17, 2007

Dear Publishing Enthusiast,

You may be wondering to yourself why I am qualified to be writing a guide to the publishing industry. You may even be asking yourself, “What does she know about publishing? After all, she’s still an undergraduate living in Pittsburgh.” If these were your initial thoughts, I have a confession to make: I am not an expert on the publishing industry. But, I hope to become one, or at least work in the publishing industry in the near future.

In an effort to increase my knowledge—and yours—about the world of book publishing, and specifically the strategies and techniques involved in successfully marketing published books, I have created this multi-faceted guide as:

- a reference (see “Walk the Walk, Talk the Talk”; “Industry Report”; and “So You Want to Be in Publishing?”);
- an insight into professional publishing careers at both a large trade publisher and an independent press (see “Publishing Profiles”);
- and a memoir (see “On a Personal Note: A Summer Publishing Internship in the Big Apple”).

Researching, writing, and compiling this guide have allowed me to explore and combine two areas of study that I am most passionate about: literature and marketing. Additionally, creating this guide has also allowed me to gain a greater insight into the career path to which I am drawn, and I only hope that after reading this guide, you too will be better informed about pursuing a career in this competitive and rewarding industry. Good luck in all of your future book publishing endeavors. Here’s to learning how to “talk books” with the best of them!

Your fellow literary lover,

Stephanie Selah
University of Pittsburgh
Class of 2007
Majors: Marketing and English Literature
Certificate: Public & Professional Writing
### Walk the Walk, Talk the Talk

**How to Talk Books**

The following terms should be used as a reference when reading over the rest of this guide in order to reduce confusion and repeat explanations of concepts. Plus, you can use these new terms to impress any publishing contact, whether you’re in an interview or you simply find yourself in a conversation about the industry in general. Either way, learning these unfamiliar terms will help you stand out in this competitive industry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAUP</td>
<td>Association of American University Presses</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABA</td>
<td>American Booksellers Association; most prominent association in book publishing representing bookstores across the United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALA</td>
<td>American Library Association; an important source of book sales in the industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARC</td>
<td>advanced reading copies with an attractive cover (similar to the actual book cover), along with editorial flap copy (summary), and sales and marketing data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backlist</td>
<td>a reference to the entire collection of titles that have already been released by a certain publishing house and that continue to sell; a strong backlist is generally a source of the majority of sales revenues in any given year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back-of-book cards</td>
<td>another type of reader response card that is found at the back of the book as part of the bound pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>an online community, usually focused on discussion of one specific topic (i.e., gaming blogs), that allows members to engage in an open-forum dialogue on one website; very important to online marketing efforts for books that have a very specific audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blurb</td>
<td>a positive quote that endorses a book or author; usually from someone influential and famous</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book Expo America (BEA)</td>
<td>the largest and most important book tradeshow in the United States; usually characterized by lavish spending on prime booth space, displays, and tons of free books</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book buzz</td>
<td>a term used to describe the most desirable, intangible effects of a successful marketing campaign; a marketer’s premiere goal in book publishing is to create “buzz” around a book</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-op advertising</td>
<td>when publishers pay bookstores money to advertise a specific title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dump</td>
<td>point-of-purchase displays used in bookstores to help sell a selected book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“E &amp; L”</td>
<td>the educational, library, and institutional segment of the sale of books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elhi</td>
<td>a category in book publishing that includes elementary and high school textbooks, reference books, and related materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endcaps</td>
<td>shelves at the end of aisles that are perpendicular to the main shelves where select titles are featured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-out display</td>
<td>when a book is placed on a shelf with its front cover facing consumers instead of with its spine out; far preferred to spine-out displays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five-part mailer</td>
<td>used in a direct mail marketing plan, these mailers include an outer envelope, a letter, a brochure, an order form, and a return envelope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flap copy</td>
<td>the writing that generally summarizes the plot of a book and is supposed to entice potential readers to purchase the book; the flap is the removable book cover found on hardback books (can also be referred to as jacket copy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontlist</td>
<td>a reference to the collection of titles that is currently in the process of being released; this</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
includes every book in all genres released in any given quarter

Galley – very durable, uninspiring-looking paperback copy of a complete book issued about 3 months before a book’s official publication date; sent to reviewers and bookstore personnel

Hand sell – when employees in bookstores, often independent, personally recommend a title to a consumer; one of the most effective techniques for selling a title

Hardbound book – a book containing 64 pages or more with a hard, exterior cover

Imprint – another name for a publisher’s line of books; all books within one imprint are in the same genre; for example, two imprints at HarperCollins are the Ecco imprint, which publishes poetry, and the Harper Perennial imprint, which publishes literary adult fiction

Launch – the company-wide introduction of new, seasonal books to the publishing house (usually separated by imprint) occurring about one to one and a half years before publication dates; a major portion of the multi-day meeting involves a dialogue between editorial and marketing staff with sales representatives about price and target readership

“Over the transom” – a term used for unsolicited manuscripts, referring to the process of submitting finished manuscripts to editors immediately after they are finished, or “hot off the press”

P & L statements – profit and loss statements; financial income statements that serve as both a predictor of estimated sales and a measurement of actual sales for a book

Paperback book – a book containing at least 64 pages or more with a paperboard cover

Reader response cards – usually “blown in” with air pressure to the spine of a book, these marketing tools are used to entice readers to request more information or to take advantage of a special deal in exchange for consumer information; if returned, these cards are generally added to a consumer database for future marketing

Release date – also referred to as the “drop date” or “publication date;” the official date that a book is available in print for purchase by the public, in bookstores, online, and through the publisher

Remainder – unsold or returned books that are sold by a publisher at a discounted price to distributors and bookstores

Royalty – what the author receives as part of the number of books he or she sells (portion of net income)

Serial rights – Use of excerpts from a book in magazines and newspapers; first and second: first serial rights grant serial publication prior to book publication; second serial rights sell excerpts after book publication

Shelf-talker – customized labeling that draws attention to certain books in a section

STM – a term used in professional publishing to denote scientific, technical, and medical books

Stripped book – a paperback whose cover has been removed; destroyed cover is usually returned to publisher for full credit return and book should be destroyed by bookseller, although often, stripped books are sold at a discount in sidewalk or used book sales

Subsidiary rights – (also known as “sub-rights”) all the ways the contents of a book can be used other than in its original form—magazines, articles, films, translations, calendars, audio versions, CD-ROMs, etc.

Tip sheet – a tool used by sales representatives for a publishing house that includes information like title, ISBN number, a short summary of the book, price information, release date, and holiday tie-in angles
The publishing industry, as it stands today in the United States, is an industry fraught with rising and falling power struggles among major trade publishers, volatile changes in market trends, and an ever-growing need to engage consumers using creative marketing techniques in an effort to sell more books. This is an industry traditionally characterized by passionate employees who share a deep love of literature with an increasingly contemporary focus on those with an acute business sense as well. This is an industry where books, and their authors, can be made and then broken within weeks—from the top of The New York Times’ Bestseller List to the bottom of the discount bin in bookstores across the nation. It is this innovative, creative industry that we will be exploring in its most modern context.

**A Shift in Authority**

As the traditional disseminators of information in its most publicized format, publishers and editors were often seen “as gatekeepers, ascertaining what is important enough to see the light of day as a book and legitimizing ideas and theories” by the very act of publication (Greco 4). Today, however, the role and authority of publishers and editors is far less a source of legitimacy for the literate masses. The increase in accessible, public channels of information—with TV, podcasts, online databases, and the increasingly popular self-publication on the Internet—has created a widespread skepticism toward the validity and quality of public information and publicized works in general. Instead of trusting publishers and editors to publish quality works, book consumers rely on the established acclaim of well-known authors, the reviews of reputable publications such as The New York Times Book Review, Publishers Weekly, or Kirkus Reviews, and, most highly of all, the personal referrals of friends or acquaintances (Cole 61, 158). These sources are just objective enough to provide consumers with the information they need to decide whether to browse through, read, or purchase a book.

**Challenges in the Industry**

Since many consumers find themselves inundated with information and alternative mediums of publication, and especially since books themselves are a “fragile product” with a short shelf-life, effective marketing is becoming an increasingly necessary key to the success of a trade publishing house. According to Albert Greco, a book that does not generate sales almost immediately after being released “is pulled from the shelves within perhaps six weeks” (6). So, the marketing campaign for any book must be solidly constructed in order to maximize sales within the first few weeks (and preferably the first few days) that the book hits the market.

Another challenge lies in the fact that the book publishing industry generally conforms to the “power law” of Pareto Distribution (Greco 7). This means that only about 20% of the books published account for 80%, or the majority, of sales. Therefore, 80% of the books published by major trade houses will return very low revenues, requiring vast amounts of
production, marketing, and editorial costs without the added benefit of generating decent sales. In addition to this, a unique challenge facing the publishing industry is that unsold books can be returned for a full refund in what is known as remainders. Publishers must therefore consider this when estimating their profit and loss for each book. As of 2001, an average of 30% of hardbound books and 20% of paperback books were returned in one year (Greco 37). These returns translate to a giant loss of sales at the end of the fiscal year, a continual source of irritation and anxiety for publishing houses trying to achieve positive income on all published titles.

Due to all of the major challenges above, the publishing industry as a whole needs to learn to adapt to changes in the industry quickly in order to get out books that the public will jump at buying at the exact time that the topic of the book is being talked about. For this reason, people working in the publishing world need to be up-to-date on the most current trends and issues in pop culture, politics, religion, medicine/science, and entertainment on a local, national, and international level. If and when trends in any of these areas are established, timing is critical to the success of a book and publishers need to be able to rapidly turn book ideas into published titles—from editorial outline to finished, published book—in as little as four weeks. If the turnaround time on a book focused on a current trend is prolonged, the book market may already be saturated by other books on that topic or the topic may well be yesterday’s news.

For these reasons, the book publishing industry continues to challenge marketers, publicists, and editors to perform their jobs more efficiently and with a certain degree of flexibility while revealing the need for increased cultural awareness, anticipation of market trends, and accuracy in predicting sales figures for book titles.

There are currently nine main book categories in the publishing industry, not including some smaller, niche markets (Greco 27). Each category, along with its corresponding estimated net sales for 2007 (in millions) can be seen in the bar graph on page 8. The categories are:

- Trade
- Mass Market Paperback
- Book Clubs
- Mail Order Books
- Religious
- Professional
- University Press
- Elhi
- College

Each of these categories must be approached from a different marketing angle. An effective campaign for a religious book that targets Catholics and churchgoers in the South and Mid-West would not work well for selling a book club edition of a popular, sensationalized novel. With this in mind, an in-depth look at each of the above categories will provide insight into the types of audiences a book from each category should target.

**Trade books** are those books with a general audience in mind, as opposed to those books, like college textbooks, with a specialized audience. Most fiction books are trade books. This category includes adult and juvenile, fiction and nonfiction books, in hardback and paperback, and these are the books that are generally associated with big, media-driven publicity and marketing campaigns in book publishing. This is “the most visible book niche” since the bestsellers usually come from this category of books (Greco 27). Surprisingly, however, this group only represents 29% of all published books (Greco 27). So where do the millions of other books in the market come from?

**Mass market paperback** books are smaller than hardback books, and this difference, combined with their typical lack of illustrations, allows them to be priced inexpensively. These are probably the second most visible and popular book category among book consumers today, and they can be found in airports and supermarkets, along with bookstores. The
President Lyndon Johnson's war on Poverty policy translates to more educational funding for library books and ELHI market books. Publishers are able to turn a nice profit on sales of these books.

The end of the Vietnam War drains the U.S. economy, resulting in an economic recession that leads to political upheavals and a consumer spending standstill in the world of publishing.
Mass communications companies are now established in the United States through mergers and acquisitions. A search for alternative outlets for publishing and releasing content begins, including broadband, on-demand delivery, and cable TV. Once found, a race to control these new content outlets and create first-mover advantages in the market ensues.

Major media entertainment companies show an interest in book publishing companies and mergers occur to link these entertainment mediums; an example of this is Rupert Murdoch of News Corporation's decision to acquire Harper & Row, later to become HarperCollins Publishers.

The retail industry continues to be the largest channel for book distribution. Giants in this industry include Barnes & Noble and Borders bookstores. Libraries and academic institutions show signs of slower growth, while the Elhi market burgeons. Online booksellers, with their ability to provide just-in-time inventory of books, thereby decreasing inventory and return costs, threaten to cut market share from more traditional publishers' distribution channels.
marketing strategy used with these low-priced books is to produce the highest volume possible at the lowest costs in order to reap the benefits of volume discounts from printers (Greco 30). These books generally cost consumers between $4.99 and $6.99—not a bad price for a fast, easy “beach read.” Consumers can purchase these books on impulse without putting much thought into the quality of the literature and without feeling guilty about spending a lot on costly hardback editions. Although these books do generate almost $2 billion dollars each year, publishers lose a lot of money on the low profit margins that result from the low retail price for consumers and the high returns (in remainders) that publishers must accept from booksellers at the end of each quarter. Interestingly, unsold mass market paperback books, unlike unsold trade books, are stripped of their covers, which are sent back to publishers for credit, and then summarily pulped (burned or recycled into paper or cardboard/paper products) on site.

**Book club** books are editions of books created specifically for reading groups, or book clubs. Book club books are part of a niche market that is still profitable, but that is increasingly seeing rising competition from superstores, online discount retailers, price clubs, and discount stores (Greco 31). If book clubs can save money on high-volume purchases made from sources other than publishers directly, this book category will decline sharply since publishers cannot compete with such low prices. Currently, some of the largest book clubs in the United States are the Book-of-the-Month Club, Quality Paperback, and the Literary Guild; these clubs are general book clubs without a focus on one specialized topic (Cole 143). Most smaller book clubs today, however, focus on one topic—either professional or personal—and these smaller clubs can be a targeted source of high-volume sales for those titles that fit in a specific book club category.

**Mail order books** are those books made available exclusively through catalogs. As depicted in the graph above, however, they are barely even a source of income for publishers these days. With the easy access that the Internet offers consumers, mail order book catalogs for consumers are on their way out. Snail mail catalogs cannot compete with Internet bookseller sites like Amazon.com and B&N.com that possess secure, real-time purchasing capabilities and next-day guaranteed shipping at a competitive price.

The net sales for religious books, or those books dealing with religious practice, study, and direction, are fairly constant due to the relatively steady population of religious people who are easy to find and target marketing efforts to by contacting religious associations and groups. Most of the sales from this category come from the purchase of reprinted Bibles and testaments, as well as popular guides for modern religious living published by well-known religious figures and preachers throughout the world, such as the wildly popular *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren. High-volume sales for these types of books often come from churches or organized religious associations looking to build classes or study groups around a certain book.

The professional book category includes subcategories in business, law, medical, and technical/scientific/other; however, the scientific, technical, and medical categories can be combined into one category called STM (Greco 31). Interest in this nonfiction book category as a whole has grown in the wake of recent political events and business trends, including:

- the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001
- the bursting of the Internet bubble in early 2000
- the increased number of business students in
undergraduate and postgraduate programs
• mergers and acquisitions
• a general information and technological explosion in science, technology, and medicine (Greco 32–33).

In any case, it is not surprising that this category is the second-largest in net sales for book publishers.

Even though the last three book categories—*elhi*, *college, and university presses*—are targeted toward a primarily academic audience, they are remarkably dissimilar in terms of market demand and net sales volume.

*Elhi*, or the elementary and high school market, books are a huge source of revenue for book publishers. This market requires yearly purchases of printed, interactive workbooks and updated textbooks for every student in a classroom. Threats to the success of this current book category include electronic publishing products like CD-ROMs and interactive supplemental materials, including quizzes, games, and practice tests. Despite this, Greco strongly believes that “it seems difficult to believe that a radical transformation from print to electronic will occur” in the near future (35).

*College textbooks* are another impressive source of revenue in the publishing industry. The only problem with this market is that there is a threat of competition from the used textbook market (Greco 35). As most college students are well aware, prices for new textbooks are often well above $100, making the purchase of a used textbook or a reduced-price textbook sold by another student, a much more attractive deal. If a new addition is not required for the course, professors are praised for saving their students money and students are happy to have some extra cash in their pockets. Used bookstores are obviously extremely happy with this outcome as well, since they will generate more revenues from increased sales of books. For this reason, publishers are trying to invest money in publishing textbooks electronically with e-books in order to reduce costs and generate more income (Greco 35). Still, the threat of student sharing (i.e., buying one textbook for two or more people or file-sharing with electronic downloads) is very real and may cause the textbook market to decline in net sales without proper management of...
How I Got There

I wasn’t going to get the summer internship. True, I had applied in early December and was called back for an interview in early January, but the call just happened to come on the very day that I was leaving the country for four months to study abroad. My excitement at the interest shown in my application by one of the largest trade publishing houses in the world was suddenly overshadowed by my dismay at realizing that competitive internships like this wouldn’t have any trouble filling open spots with eligible candidates. Students from New York University, Cornell, Duke, Yale, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Columbia would be applying in the hundreds for a summer internship with HarperCollins Publishers at their New York City headquarters. And I was just a junior marketing and English literature major from the University of Pittsburgh—a humbling realization in the face of such tough Ivy League competition.

But I did get the internship. Persistent monthly email correspondence with the Human Resources Assistant from remote port locations like South Africa, India, Vietnam, and Japan along my Semester at Sea voyage must have won over the Human Resources Manager, who agreed to meet with me immediately after my return to the United States. All of the positions were already filled, but I continued to show my interest and enthusiasm for the program during the interview, and they actually created an extra spot for me. I was now on my way to experiencing life on the inside of the competitive book publishing industry.

Rotations, Rotations

The first week, we were given instructions about our assignments as part of the ten-week rotational program that HarperCollins created for the summer interns. Rotational departments include editorial, marketing, publicity, legal, audio, sub-rights, and sales, and would be assigned on a two-week basis. Rotational assignments were primarily pulled from initial interviews with the Human Resources Manager and resume qualifications, as well as the level of interest each intern showed in each department. Additional departments, like art and permissions, hire their own interns apart from the rotational program and were not available for a rotation assignment.

Each of the available departments exists in various imprints, or book categories, in both the children’s and adult divisions. In total, HarperCollins has 36 imprints in the United States, with 22 of these included in the adult division. To clarify this corporate structure of imprints within departments within divisions, one of my rotations placed me in the adult division working with the marketing department in the cookbook imprint, Morrow Cookbooks. Thus, a level of expertise for each imprint can be achieved by focusing the department’s efforts on a specialized market in order to create successful imprints from legal acquisition of the manuscript to final title sales and revenues for each quarter.
My focus, as a marketing and English major, was more in line with the marketing and publicity departments; but, as anyone interested in publishing is probably intrigued by, I was also curious about the editorial department. My five rotations for the ten-week program were:

- Harper Perennial/Ecco marketing
- William Morrow marketing
- Morrow Cookbooks marketing
- Children’s publicity (working on various imprints)
- William Morrow editorial

The general attitude toward internships is that you get paid nothing, or almost nothing, to go on coffee runs, answer phones, and file all day. But my experience was not at all like this! I was paid competitive internship wages and given real responsibilities that allowed me to contribute to prepress promotional efforts, preparation of trade show pieces, marketing database creation and management, creative marketing campaigns for larger titles, and manuscript critiques. And yes, one day, I had to answer phones for an editorial assistant. But that day, I talked with celebrity Ron Jeremy (he’s actually a very nice guy) about plans for his upcoming book, *The Hardest* (working) *Man in Hollywood*—not quite the stereotypical internship day.

In the Harper Perennial department, I remember drafting promotional galley letters for two books in particular—one was an edgy, debut coming-of-age novel set in the sex-drugs-and-rock-and-roll early 1990s and the other was a nonfiction biography about legendary boxing trainer Teddy Atlas. Obviously, these books required a very different target audience. One was written by a first-time author who was probably unheard of in literary circles, while the other had the advantage of focusing on a relatively famous person whose life would intrigue both boxers and boxing enthusiasts.

So, in order to target these vastly different groups, I began to research the most effective ways to target a college-age market for the novel and boxing enthusiasts for the biography. Since the budget for the debut novel was a lot smaller, I eventually settled on compiling a mailing list of national college radio stations, where free copies of the novel would be sent as rock-and-roll contest give-away prizes. The larger market for Teddy Atlas’ biography drew me to compile a list of every local boxing club and gym owner in the New York City area; owners would then be sent a complimentary copy of the book along with

- Seven Stories Press
- Garamond Press
- Persea Books

**Where to Look for Jobs:**

- Book Jobs (www.bookjobs.com)
- Publishers Marketplace (www.publishersmarketplace.com)
- Media Bistro (www.mediabistro.com)
- The Bulldog Reporter (www.bulldogreporter.com)
- Craigs List (www.craigslist.com)

**For Pittsburgh:** Public Relations Society of America – Pittsburgh Chapter (www.prsa-pgh.org)

**Once You’ve Landed the Job:**

**Who to send galleys to:**

For reviews inside the trade industry, send galley copies to the following publications:

- *Booklist*, American Library Association, 50 E. Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611; (312) 944-6780
- *Library Journal*, 249 W. 17th Street, New York, NY 10011; (212) 463-6819
- *Kirkus Reviews*, 200 Park Avenue S., New York, NY 10003; (212) 777-4554
- *Publishers Weekly*, 249 W. 17th Street, New York, NY 10011; (212) 645-0067

For specialized booksites accessible on the Internet, use the following:

- Readers Ndex (www.ReadersNdex.com)
- Book Zone (www.BookZone.com)
- Bookwire (www.bookwire.com)

And don’t forget major newspapers with a national reach:

- *USA Today*
- *The Wall Street Journal*
- *Washington Post*
- *Chicago Tribune*
information for ordering copies for their gym. These projects challenged my ability to read a market and think creatively within the constraints of different budgets.

An Ambiguously Titled Book Proposal

An even bigger component of my internship experience, however, was the ten-week project that hung above all of the interns’ daily responsibilities as we learned how each department operated and applied these newfound insights to creating our own full-scale, original book proposal.

Although this was an exercise in creatively exhibiting what we had learned over the course of the summer, there were certain ground rules in place. First of all, the concept for the book had to be completely original, meaning that there could be no books of its kind currently in print. General sections required in the proposal included an editorial outline containing a few sample chapters in final layout format; marketing and publicity campaigns realistically based on budget restrictions; legal copyright information; a cover design with fully formatted flap copy; sample press releases; promotional galley letters; and a P & L statement. Ours also included a sales tip sheet for sales representatives; a sample targeted database list for galley and ARC mailings; and a few additional sample excerpts from our original American street vending guide, Street Meat: What’s Cookin’ On The Corner.

The concept of our book was to explore the world of the street vendors as no one had dared to before. With the Food Network’s George Duran as our hypothetical author, this book would not only explore and document the cultural foods lining the streets of major American cities, creating a fun, easy reference guide for hungry travelers, but it would also explore answers to common vendor-related questions like, “Is the food safe to eat?,” “Where do the vendors go to the bathroom?,” and “How do hot dogs, and other famous foods cooked on a street cart, end up tasting so good?” Our target audience was primarily food-lovers in their 20’s and 30’s who would appreciate the book’s edgy approach to alternative cuisine in America.

Along with this proposal, which was a big hit when we presented it to CEO Jane Friedman and a panel of top-level HarperCollins executives, we created fun, vendor food-related promotional items from Cafepress.com. These included mugs, aprons, and pins with our book’s signature logo—a street vendor cart that was branded with the deliciously provocative and humorously ambiguous title STREET MEAT. These promotional items were created to mirror those items given out by street teams for bigger titles to create a buzz for the books before publication release dates.

Lasting Impressions

At the end of the ten weeks, I couldn’t believe it was all over. The chaotic flurry of deadlines and mass mailings, the company-wide and departmental meetings, the carefree lunch dates with fellow interns, the book parties and book signings—a whole summer working on the inside of such an exciting industry would now filter down to a distant, but happy memory. At our final dinner, the other interns and I optimistically discussed how great it would be to end up working in publishing someday, perhaps even in the same publishing house we had just interned at. But for now, we parted ways. My big debut internship in the Big Apple was finally over, and with a few personalized notes of thanks to my mentors, a tote bag full of books, and one last look at 10 East 53rd Street, I was off to find my own path into the world of publishing.

To view an example of a promotional galley letter that I wrote to food festival coordinators on behalf of Street Meat, refer to next page.
reselling or yearly updated editions of textbooks.

University presses, due to their characteristically tight budgets and a general, humanitarian focus on “extend[ing] the classroom into the community,” do not return huge profits or generate mass sales volume (Greco 34). There are only 121 presses enrolled in the Association of American University Presses, and yet, these publishers are the established source for providing the most up-to-date, leading research and information in the academic world. Thus, despite low sales volume and revenue, university presses are a vital source of information in the academic world.

Virtually every printed book ever created falls into one of these nine established categories. Establishing the category or genre for a book is essential to helping cultivate a book’s target audience, which will help generate book sales and drive strategic thinking for the implementation of effective, maximum-reach marketing campaigns.

Sample Promotional Galley Letter for Street Meat

March 1, 2008

Dear Food Lover,

Walk along the streets of any major American city and you will see them...EVERYWHERE! Carts filled with hot dogs, gyros, falafels, roasted nuts (a wintertime specialty), and pretzels. Vendors quickly prepare food for growing lines of busy—and hungry—customers. Though these merchants and their carts are almost ubiquitous within major cities, there has never been much talk or exploration into their world, or their wares. However, one man has sought to discover the mysteries and musings of America’s staple city dwellers: George Duran.

In this cleverly concocted debut book STREET MEAT: WHAT’S COOKIN’ ON THE CORNER, Duran, host of the Food Network’s zany new show, “Ham on the Street,” hits the streets on his delicious quest for honest answers. Duran’s humorous antics will both educate and entertain as he leads you behind the carts in some of America’s biggest cities, sprouting food facts and useful travel tips in homage to our country’s favorite vendors.

See how early reviewers have devoured Duran’s unique STREET MEAT:

“There’s no book out there quite like STREET MEAT. It’s a one-of-a-kind look at an American culinary institution: vendor food. Who would have thought there could be so much behind the cart?” —The New York Times

“Prepare to rethink the way you look at street food.” —Mario Batali

“George Duran’s new book really opened my eyes to a whole new world of vendor food beyond hot dogs.” —Jon Stewart

We’re hoping you too, as a fellow lover of all hot dogs made and served on the street, will be as delighted as we were by STREET MEAT. Heck, by the time you’ve finished, you may even be on your way to starting your own street cart (if you haven’t already)! Enjoy your advance copy. STREET MEAT goes on sale May 10—if you would like to order additional copies for your vendors or your festival, please contact me at (202) 867-5309 or email me at the address below.

Your fellow food fanatic,

Stephanie Selah
(Position Title, Publishing Company)
(Contact Information)


Publishing Profiles: 

AMY BAKER

A Call for Innovation and Creativity: Reaching Consumers in Unlikely Places

Amy Baker has been working at HarperCollins Publishers for the past six years. As the Associate Marketing Director for Harper Perennial, the paperback imprint of quality fiction and nonfiction at HarperCollins Publishers, she attends book parties for authors and annual trade shows, writes flap copy for book covers, and starts promoting books months before their release date by reaching specific target audiences in effective, and creative, ways. Working in one of the largest publishing houses in the heart of New York City’s mid-town Manhattan seems pretty glamorous, but as I learned from my internship here, it’s not all champagne toasts and celebrations for rising New York Times’ bestsellers.

Much of the hard work that goes into creating successful books depends on the strategically planned hard work of the teams dedicated to each imprint, beginning with the launch of a book almost a year and a half before its publication date.

Books are stacked from the floor to the ceiling in multiple bookcases in Amy’s office. Colorful hardback covers and multiple copies of galleys surround the desk that is basking in the warm, friendly glow of a reading lamp. Hers is an office brimming with literary stimulation—the polished plots and intricate, critically-acclaimed stories neatly tucked between the covers of these hundreds of books, resisting in their finalized versions the fragmented memories of revised plots, underdeveloped ideas, unsuccessful publicity or marketing campaigns, and time-crunch deadlines. And all of this literariness is appropriately capped with the distinctly subtle scent of freshly printed books. It is the type of office that invites reading—the type of office that one would expect anyone in book publishing to keep. And amid this chaotic stew of ideas and information, Amy is looking relaxed, down-to-earth, and happy as I take a seat across from her to begin our interview.

Amy’s path to launching a successful career in book publishing was not exactly a straight one. She didn’t grow up in New York City. (She actually grew up in a city near and dear to our hearts—Pittsburgh!) She didn’t get a degree in English literature. (She decided not to go to college after high school.) She didn’t even know that she necessarily wanted to be in book publishing. (But she’s definitely found her niche in it now!)

After graduating from high school and deciding that college wasn’t where she wanted to be, she began working in retail and working as a waitress in Pittsburgh. Feeling the West coast calling her, Amy then headed out to California before returning to the East coast and relocating to New York City. It was in New York that she started her first job linked to the book publishing industry as a cashier at a local Barnes & Noble Booksellers. Here, she began to see the consumer side of book publishing as customers decided what books were worth purchasing based on hand sell methods, personal referrals, printed reviews, and various in-store promotional signage and book placement. Moving up to the level of store manager through her dedicated participation in community relations events with the store, Amy then decided to join a friend in managing an independent bookstore called In Communicado, which turned into an independent publishing company with its modest headquarters located in the front of a bar called Tonic.

It was while working here and waitressing part-time that Amy claims she was “discovered” by Carrie Kania, who is currently Vice President, Associate Publisher of the Harper Trade division of the General Books Group, which includes HarperCollins, Perennial, Quill, and Fourth Estate. Amy became Carrie’s assistant and has since moved up within the imprint, so her experience with the book publishing industry has really brought her full circle, from selling finalized printed books in a retail environment to creating marketing plans a year in...it’s not all champagne toasts and celebrations for rising New York Times’ bestsellers.
advance for a manuscript that isn’t even finished yet.

Our discussion progressed from Amy’s background that had prepared her for her entry into publishing to her experiences at HarperCollins Publishers specifically. When I asked Amy what her favorite marketing campaign to work on was, she cited *I Am Not Myself These Days*, the 2006 memoir by previously unknown New York City advertising art director Josh Kilmer-Purcell, with little hesitation. “We knew we had this great memoir by an unknown author, and it was great to just see it catch on and grow,” said Amy about this *New York Times* bestseller. She continued by explaining what she sees as a key element of the book’s success: the publishing house’s ability to get behind the book and to get excited about the book and the author as a house. With the support of the publishing staff, everyone gets excited about the book, including the booksellers, who then hand sell favorite books to interested customers.

With this title in particular, Barnes & Noble bookstores in the local New York City area even dedicated front-of-store displays to the book, the most coveted and sought after display location in the store. Additional marketing efforts came from the author himself, who was willing to spend hours researching people who might be interested in reading the memoir of an “art director by day/drag queen by night” online. Through friend-of-a-friend networking using MySpace.com and a more focused effort on targeting specific blogs, author Josh Kilmer-Purcell was able to get the word out about his memoir in conjunction with more traditional marketing actions taken by the publishing staff. In fact, he is still researching interested readers to this day, more than a year after the book has been on sale. In this way, he is able to increase the awareness of his book and entice interested people to purchase it online or at a local bookstore.

Another exciting marketing campaign that Amy enjoyed working on was the ongoing viral video campaign for the recently released novel, *The Average American Male* by Chad Kultgen. This title’s initial bad luck with traditional media venues, like the *New York Times Book Review* and *USA Today*, forced her and her team to rethink the strategy they would use to promote sales of this title. After brainstorming “outside-of-the-box,” Harper Perennial came up with HarperCollins’ first-ever video campaign, which Amy got to direct and manage with the help of a production team. The original idea was simply to produce a handful of one-minute humorous videos playing up the difference between what the average guy says and what he’s really thinking in some pretty typical, often sexual, situations. These spots would then run on the wildly popular YouTube.com in order to catch the attention of the mostly-male, 18- to 35-year old adult segment of viewers who check the site on an almost daily basis.

With a relatively low-cost budget for production and a belief that this campaign would generate only moderate buzz on the website, Amy and her marketing department were pleasantly surprised at the explosive results of this campaign. Within the first week of posting them to the site, these video spots were being viewed more than one million times a day, gaining the prestigious distinction of Video of the Day on YouTube. Fans of these humorous clips also placed them in their MySpace profiles, further increasing the reach of awareness for the book; and Break.com, a YouTube-like website, posted the videos, registering more than 2.5 million hits each day. The unanticipated success of this campaign, which Amy added, was fun to work on, made the book a hit with this market during its first week of sales and the videos continue to be viewed in record-breaking numbers to this day. All three of these videos can be viewed at YouTube.com.

Obviously, as both of these successful marketing campaigns show, it is critical that a book receive as much awareness in the market as possible, both before and after its release date, in order to generate sales and become the “talk of the town.” But when I asked Amy
if bad reviews and bad press had ever seriously hurt a book’s sales, she had a surprisingly upbeat answer. “You know, I really believe that popular saying: ‘Any publicity is good publicity.’” She did admit that key reviews in key places, like a daily feature in The New York Times, or on the trade side of book publishing, a starred review in Publishers Weekly, could really promote a book’s sales. But even more than this, a major driver of book sales is a positive review of any book on the national radio programmer, National Public Radio (NPR).

Other successful methods of reaching a particular market include co-sponsoring events and cross-promoting both the book and a particular partner company in order to expand the number of people exposed to the book. Both the company partnering with the book publisher and the book publisher pay discounted, pre-negotiated split rates for an event or promotion since they both benefit from promotional exposure. Amy named some particularly memorable cross-promotional companies that her imprint has worked with, and continues to work with, including science publication Seed Magazine for books with a science-loving audience, Sutter Home Wine for middle-aged women’s reading group books, and American Apparel for books targeted at a younger, trendier audience who appreciates the “t-shirt chique” style of clothing this company is famous for producing.

When it comes to creating a “buzz,” promotional materials worn, carried, or given out by local street teams hired to market a book, especially by an underground author, can also be quite effective. As Amy holds up a bright-red t-shirt with large black letters, proclaiming, “I’d Rather Be Reading Bukowski,” she proceeds to tell me exactly how effective this technique can be at creating buzz and enthusiasm for promoting books. Charles Bukowski was a contemporary poet and short story writer whose work continues to influence many writers today and has created a cult-like following. With this in mind, it is no wonder that when one of the Harper Perennial staff walked down the streets of Manhattan wearing this very shirt, a stranger approached her and offered to pay her money if she would part with it on the spot!

From t-shirts to cross-promotions, from viral video campaigns to traditional New York Times and NPR coverage, successfully marketing to the book publishing trade requires a highly specialized strategy for promoting books and creating buzz on a title-by-title basis. Although it’s not easy, it seems to be fun for the literary enthusiasts like Amy Baker who don’t find it difficult to get behind the books and authors they promote as they identify and reach target audiences in the most creative, effective ways possible.

As I said goodbye to Amy about an hour later, a generous armful of complimentary galleys in my arms, I wondered who was more delighted by the marketing efforts that placed quality fiction and non-fiction stories in the hands of interested readers—the marketing staff responsible for the rise of a popular book or the readers themselves, thrilled to find a book they could connect with and enjoy. But in the end, I guess it doesn’t matter.

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**LARGE TRADE PUBLISHING MARKETING EFFORTS:**

- Define book’s audience and selling points
- Proceed with prepress promotion, including printing galleys and ARCs for review
- Create a spot for book in quarterly catalog
- Press releases begin with high-profile publications and national newspapers
- Advanced blurbs acquired from well-known or influential people
- Promotional material and tip sheet created for sales representatives
- Contact chain, specialty, and independent book retailers to confirm distribution channels
- Begin in-store promotions with in-store specialty retailers (like Urban Outfitters)
- Begin cross-promotions with author’s professional or social associations, along with Amazon.com
- Create book blogs with links to blogs on well-known, related websites
- Design and create promotional products and hire street team, if necessary, for local promotions
An Ongoing Struggle: A Perspective on Working at an Independent Press

Dave (who would like his last name to remain anonymous) is a recent 2006 graduate of the University of Pittsburgh. Graduating with a degree in communications and American history, as well as a concentration in German studies, he admits with candor over the phone that he actually has “no interest in reading.” In fact, as he approached the booth for Sterling House Publisher, Inc. in the spring of 2005 at Pitt’s Non-Technical Internship Fair, he confesses that the publisher’s booth was the least appealing to him of all the company booths present. He certainly never thought that a summer internship at Sterling House, leading to part-time paid work, would result in landing him the first full-time job of his career.

Although Dave has only been at Sterling House for a year since graduating last April, his extensive knowledge about everything from the company’s financial situation to acquisitions editorial issues to industry trends and the shifting focus of marketing efforts online boasts a far more impressive mastery of publishing than an entry-level promotions and public relations position at a larger company would typically generate. I soon found out, however, that at an independent press, the ability to take on many different roles, from marketer to publicist to editor, is critical to the success of the company.

Sterling House Publisher, Inc. is a company of CyntoMedia Corporation, and is headed by Pittsburgh native and CEO Cynthia Sterling. As of 2006, Sterling House has nine imprints, acquiring over 40 new titles each year. They are currently working with about 120–130 active authors who are still scheduling book signings, radio interviews, and promotional events for books that have already been published. With such a narrow number of titles coming out each year, I wondered if Sterling House was considered to be a niche publisher, concentrating on acquiring one focused genre of books in particular. Dave dissuaded me from reaching this conclusion, however, noting that the only genres that Sterling House does not publish are erotica and poetry.

Unlike the larger publishing houses in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, Dave cited two of the challenges of working at an independent press as not having enough contacts, or enough capital. Addressing the second of these points, Dave confides: “In publishing, you really need a decent chunk of capital before you can start making capital.” And in an industry saturated by thousands of new fiction titles each year, this can be quite a difficult thing to obtain. Without the financial capital, the company will be unable to generate and drive book sales, resulting in periods of low profitability and destroying not only the quality image of the publishing house, but also the quality of manuscripts submitted to the press. And once again, the cycle continues with a decrease in the quality of manuscripts submitted leading to a decrease in the number of printed books sold, and a decrease in profits, resulting in a compromised negative image of the independent press. If this is giving you a headache, imagine how the staff at an independent press must feel. Essentially, with only 40 new books acquired each year, this means that Dave and the six other staff members at Sterling House are single-handedly responsible for the success of the publishing house as a whole.

In order to ensure the success of the books acquired, Dave first assists authors new to publishing in developing a “marketing platform” for their books. One example of a successful platform Dave recently developed is promoting a former surgeon who wrote a fictional medical thriller as an advocate for patients’ rights. By expanding the accessibility of this book and broadening the scope of interested parties from readers interested in medical thrillers to medical workers, patients, and interested parties advocating patients’...
rights in hospitals, more people are attracted to the author, hopefully resulting in more purchased books.

Once this marketing platform is in place, the major promotional work to create buzz around a book’s release needs to begin. With tight budgets and limited contacts, it is unlikely that any authors will be able to get an interview with Oprah Winfrey or be featured on the front cover of the *New York Times Book Review;* so Sterling House focuses its marketing efforts on radio interviews and promotional radio spots. Dave points out that these types of interviews are “easily done over the phone and can even be set up while an author is on vacation with a cell phone. So we save money while still creating exposure for authors.”

In conjunction with these author radio interviews, Dave’s job involves sending out press releases and promotional brochures and flyers, especially to an author’s local hometown newspaper, to announce a book’s release and contacting established local bookstores, like Barnes & Noble, for author book signings. While Dave may set up this media coverage and these events, the limited staff at Sterling makes it difficult, if not impossible, to follow the author to all of these promotional events. Instead, with an independent press, authors really need to take a more active role in promoting their own books. Dave’s marketing-adopted proverbial mantra is this: “If I teach my author to fish, he’ll be able to feed himself for a lifetime.”

In a competitive industry that Dave feels will be shifting heavily toward Internet-based marketing, how prepared is Sterling House Publisher, Inc. to move forward successfully in the coming years? Dave mentions that while his company is limited by its number of staff, it is flexible enough to accept this shift in emphasis from traditional media-driven marketing campaigns and compete in the online market.

He also proudly mentions how Sterling House continues to compete for attention and recognition in more traditional media. This year, at the annual publishing tradeshow held in May, Book Expo America (BEA), Sterling House has rented a large booth and will be featured the same week of the tradeshow on the front cover of one of the trade’s most well-respected and most frequently read publications, *Publishers Weekly.* Up until December 2006, Sterling had a difficult time even setting up an appointment to meet with the in-demand editors of this publication, but with the recently acquired *New York Times* best-selling author and primal scream theorist, Dr. Arthur Janov on board, this independent Pittsburgh press is finally receiving the well-deserved attention of the New York publishing circuit.

In spite of all of the successes and advancements he has witnessed in the past year, and with a generally positive attitude toward Sterling House Publisher’s ability to continue entering new markets and creating dedicated readers, Dave is honest about the challenges that face all independent presses. He continues to mention that companies like his “really struggle” to build a name for themselves against the BIG NAME publishers that have been “ingrained in society” for as long as we’ve been reading books.

The portrait Dave paints of the independent press is not an easy one to take in, but with the struggles and the hard work that come with promoting books at a small press located far from the major publishing capitals of the world, the extra payoff comes at the moment when, as he mentions, “New York reaches out to us, in Pittsburgh.”

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**INDEPENDENT PRESS MARKETING EFFORTS:**

- Development of marketing platform
- Creation of a spot for book in yearly catalog
- Press releases begin in author’s hometown
- Author coached for publicity spots and book signings
- Author tours alone, fiercely dedicated to marketing book
- Radio interviews lead to public TV networks, leading to national TV and radio program exposure
- Other valuable resources and associations for independent presses are the Small Press Center and PMA (the Independent Book Publishers Association) (www.pma-online.org)


Sutterlin, Kathleen. “Re: Referred by Dr. Bill Neff, University of Pittsburgh.” E-mail to Stephanie Selah. 4 April 2007.