

A Publishing Revolution

In a [recent article in the UK's Guardian](#), magazine editor and publishing veteran, Robert McCrum, said “For books, the first decade of the 21st century has seen one of the great cultural earthquakes. Go back 10 years, or perhaps 20, and the landscape is barely recognizable. No Amazon; no Google and no ebook....Since the millennium, the relationship between words and money has undergone almost total inversion....The astonishing scale of this transformation has left many observers as disoriented as the survivors of a natural disaster.”

The changes are dramatic particularly in our part of the business. On one hand, the children's industry which had been driven largely by backlist sales to the school and library markets now looks very different. It's possible to have a book series attain brand status in both the children's and adult's worlds as we've seen with Harry Potter, Twilight and now the Mockingjay books.

Another big change is that authors and illustrators have gone from having one or just a few publishers to having many more. Sometimes writers mix traditional publishing for their books with self-publishing either in print or digitally. There's a lot to consider and individuals are exploring many options to establish their presence in the marketplace.

It's never too soon to start and you don't have to be published to play. Ingrid Sundberg, a YA writer and children's illustrator, who's a self-proclaimed “prepublished author” and conference junkie (also just named runner up for the SCBWI contemporary work in progress grant), has a website, a blog and has spent the last four to five years on the conference circuit. She's become a regular attendee at the regional and LA national SCBWI conferences as well as the L.A. Times Book Festival – she says she tries to attend something once a month. Sundberg's also become involved with a writers group and has begun to form friendships with some of the regulars. “It's gotten to feel like camp,” she says. “There's a lot of positive energy which helps keep up momentum when I go home.” Her advice:

- Do research on people before you go
- Make friends, say “hi” to the person next to you
- Take lots of notes, or you'll forget later on
- Promote where you'll be at the conference

Stephen Roxburgh, who was [profiled](#) for SCBWI last spring, Jenny Desmond Walters, is both an experienced publisher and a maverick. He was senior vice president and publisher at Farrar, Straus and Giroux; and the founder and president of Front Street Books. His most recent venture is [namelos](#), a company that helps authors navigate the complex publishing landscape. The objective is to help individuals clear the bar of unsolicited manuscripts that publishers receive by evaluating and advising on the work beforehand and then recommending the type of publishing it's best suited for. Expertise is in understanding traditional and emerging publishing models, and the company often recommends a mix of traditional and electronic formats for a book as well as self- and micro-niche publishing platforms.

Looking at changes in the industry in the past five years and looking forward, Roxburgh sees:

- Ebooks significantly outselling print
- Major publishers taking a hit
- Bookstores in trouble as sales move online
- Amazon, BN, Apple changing our world
- Old contracts regularly renegotiated
- Good opportunities for authors and readers
- Google, Apple, Amazon initiating enhanced books
- Ebook revolution bigger than Gutenberg

So, take a deep breath and visit <http://linkd.in/aP2bAL> for some inspirational quotes. My personal favorites: “Those who say it can’t be done shouldn’t interfere with those who are doing it.” –Billy Eberhart and “You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take.” –Wayne Gretzky.