

## 2017 Copyright Agency Cultural Fund Publisher Fellowship Report

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### How has the digital revolution changed the way publishers market and promote books?

Macquarie University and the Australia Council of the Arts' 'Reading the Reader' survey<sup>1</sup> confirmed in May 2017 that Australians love to read. Nine out of ten surveyed Australians read for interest or pleasure, with 41% of them classified as frequent readers. And while this survey recognised the slight shift toward spending less time reading books (and more time reading other material) overall the results indicate an industry that is healthy and stable but not without its unique challenges.

Some of those challenges include changes within the retail environment, the advent of hand-held digital reading devices, and the increased presence of social media. These all play into aspects of my report but my chief concern is with **how publishers today are reaching, and can reach, book buyers to let them know about new books** and is drawn from research and interviews I undertook in New York

Historically the publicity and marketing functions at Australia's major publishing houses were kept quite distinct. Publicity was responsible for securing free editorial for books within print and broadcast media and for author events; marketing planned and executed consumer advertising campaigns, produced point-of-sale, and worked closely with sales representatives to create material for them to sell from. Essentially the divide was along the lines of free versus paid. At smaller publishing houses the roles were often combined.

But with the rise of digital devices, the decline of legacy media and the explosion of social sharing sites, the old publicity and marketing mix is forever altered. Lawrie Zion, Professor of Journalism at La Trobe University, estimates conservatively that 3,000 Australian journalists have lost their jobs since 2012.<sup>2</sup> A further 125 editorial jobs went from Fairfax media this past June. These job cuts came about because of the significant downward trend in newspaper circulation, brought about by the decline in classified advertising and the availability of free news content online. Eric Beecher reported for *The Monthly* in 2013 that the percentage of Australians who purchased a daily metropolitan newspaper was down to just seven percent.<sup>3</sup>

In 2015 Facebook became the largest referrer to news sites in the world.

The decline of print media has made a powerful impact on the way that readers discover books. As the media landscape has become increasingly specialised and bricks and mortar

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<sup>1</sup> 'Reading the Reader: A Survey of Australian Reading Habits' by the Australia Council of the Arts/Macquarie University, May 2017, [www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/readers\\_survey\\_summary\\_final\\_v-592cf39be2c34.pdf](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/readers_survey_summary_final_v-592cf39be2c34.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> 'Life after redundancy: what happens next for journalists when they leave newsrooms,' Lawrie Zion, *The Conversation*, May 2017, [www.theconversation.com/life-after-redundancy-what-happens-next-for-journalists-when-they-leave-newsrooms-77154](http://www.theconversation.com/life-after-redundancy-what-happens-next-for-journalists-when-they-leave-newsrooms-77154)

<sup>3</sup> 'The death of Fairfax and the end of newspapers,' Eric Beecher, *The Monthly*, July 2013 [www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2013/july/1372600800/eric-beecher/death-fairfax-and-end-newspapers](http://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2013/july/1372600800/eric-beecher/death-fairfax-and-end-newspapers)

stores have closed down, it is harder than ever for potential readers to come across a book randomly.

While 53% of respondents to the 'Reading the Reader survey' said that they found out about new books by browsing in physical bookstores (second only in popularity to discovering books via word of mouth), the amount of physical bookstores in Australia shrunk substantially in 2011 when Borders and Angus & Robertson closed down. The news for independent bookstores in the United States has been grimmer – 50% closed between 1994 and 2014 – and Amazon now dominates the marketplace. But the importance of volume and placement within bookstores, along with hand selling by booksellers, was stressed by nearly every publishing professional I met in New York, along with visibility and reviews on Amazon of course, and the popular reader review site Goodreads, that Amazon purchased in 2013. Even though independent bookstores have just a ten percent market share in the United States they are still seen as tastemakers with the ability to create a conversation around a book that can see it picked up in other channels.

Keith Gessen, writing in *Vanity Fair* in 2014<sup>4</sup>, said that discovery became a popular term in the publishing industry in 2010 “when, after forty years in business, the major book chain Borders began its final decline. What was the value of these bookstores to publishers? It wasn't just that they sold the merchandise and split the money. It was that they displayed the merchandise.”

The outlook for print media in the United States has been bleak too. Their leading newspapers (which include mastheads like *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*) have experienced an 8% drop in circulation year on year and The Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment statistics found that the number of journalists that American newspapers employed had dropped 37% between 2004 and 2017<sup>5</sup>.

Arts, entertainment and lifestyle content have all been seen significant cuts. It is easy to syndicate reviews or interviews or buy them in from overseas. When I took my first publicity role fourteen years ago all of the major metropolitan newspapers in Australia had books editors and many had separate editors for their Sunday editions too. Editor numbers have shrunk over time, content had been increasingly syndicated, and Fairfax's metropolitan papers are now down to just one book editor, Jason Steger at *The Age*. I would argue that because of the duopoly in the newspaper business Australia is even worse off.

So it was no surprise that when I met with publishing professionals on my study tour of New York, many sited the decline of the legacy media as the biggest change they'd encountered and also their biggest challenge. When I asked what outlets they thought moved books, a variety of different outlets were named, from *Entertainment Weekly* to *Jezebel*, from children's specific blogs like *Oh Joy!* and *A Cup of Jo* to *The Huffington Post*. Their responses demonstrated how fragmented the media has become. The only outlets named

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<sup>4</sup> 'The War of the Words,' Keith Gessen, *Vanity Fair*, December 2014  
[www.vanityfair.com/news/business/2014/12/amazon-hachette-ebook-publishing](http://www.vanityfair.com/news/business/2014/12/amazon-hachette-ebook-publishing)

<sup>5</sup> 'Newspaper Fact Sheet,' Pew Research Center, June 2017, [www.journalism.org/fact-sheet/newspapers/](http://www.journalism.org/fact-sheet/newspapers/)

several times were NPR and *The Skimm*, a daily newsletter started only a few years ago and aimed at millennials.

In New York the same sentiment kept coming up again and again. ‘The old formula for creating a bestseller no longer works,’ said Jynne Dilling Martin, Associate Publisher & Publicity Director at Riverhead Books, a division of Penguin Random House. ‘It used to be that if you got the cover of *The New York Times* Book Review, an interview on NPR and perhaps a TV interview, then bestsellerdom was almost guaranteed. You can get the same coverage now and it can have no discernible effect.’

Susan Corcoran, VP Director of Publicity at Ballantine Bantam Bell, another division of Penguin Random House, concurred that the magic PR formula was no longer the same and that ‘it requires many more man hours to achieve the same result.’

April 2017 was an interesting time to be in the United States. The presidential campaign and election of Donald Trump to the presidency the previous year had consumed the news cycle and continued to do so. “People are either hooked to their phones day in and day out watching the spectacle,” said Kristin Fassler, Vice President, Director of Marketing at Ballantine Bantam Dell, “or they’ve turned away from consuming media altogether.” “The last few months have been dead for book sales,” Susan Corcoran went on, an observation confirmed by staff at other publishers too. In July 2017 Morgan Jerkins, writing for *The New Republic*, declared that “Trump’s presidential win has sent a rippling effect through the book publishing world, affecting authors, booksellers, editors, agents and publicists: in a world where reality has become stranger than fiction, actual books are no longer selling.”<sup>6</sup>

“If an author can speak to a subject in the news media then they might have a chance,” said Susan Corcoran, “but it’s hard for even tent pole fiction authors to be heard.”

*New Republic*, however, pointed out that “the same identities that are being persecuted and demonized by the Trump administration are finding a warm welcome from an increasingly diverse literary audience that is eager to hear vulnerable voices, and to read about experiences that mirror their own.”

I see this as an extreme example of the battle for consumer’s time. Publishers are competing not just with the news media but with music and video streaming services, podcasts and social media sites. This competition is taking place in an environment where the number of professional journalists and reviewers that publicists can approach continues to shrink. While some rejoice that the handful of reviewers once considered tastemakers have lost their stranglehold, replaced by blogs, reader reviews sites and social media, introducing an arguably more democratic intellectual culture (which has benefited YA, children’s, genre fiction and self-published authors in particular), others bemoan the fact that fan reviews rarely place novels within their larger cultural context.

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Is Trump Ruining Book Sales,’ Morgan Jerkins, *New Republic*, July 2017  
[www.newrepublic.com/article/144029/trump-ruining-book-sales](http://www.newrepublic.com/article/144029/trump-ruining-book-sales)

And while online news outlets proliferate many simply aggregate existing news stories. Others have failed or are shedding staff as ad blockers and Facebook have a significant effect on their viability.

Andy Dodds, Associate Director of Publicity at Grand Central Publishing, said that he used to be able to pitch to a range of critics and journalists at *The New York Times* and that this meant he could sometimes get two to three mentions in the paper for the same book. But the number of books writers had been substantially cut and now “everything has to go through the one book editor,” he said, “so if they say no, I’m out of options.” Andy now places more value on *The New York Times* monthly online round-up of new books than on reviews in the print edition of the paper.”

But in the midst of the doom and gloom about the state of book reviewing and soft sales over the winter, sales for print books did increase in the United States in 2016 by 3.3%. And while e-book sales for major publishers’ titles have been declining, indie and self-publishing is thriving in the same arena, and the appetite for books, both in the United States and Australia, remains consistent.

Michael Reynolds, Editor-in-Chief at Europa Editions, said that when he asks booksellers what sells books they say “we do.” Europa Editions, which is a small independent publisher that specialises in literature in translation, said that, outside of the occasional sponsored social media post, most of their small marketing budget is spent on trade facing advertising such as co-op, proofs, catalogues and banner advertisements in trade publications like *Booklist* and *Publisher’s Weekly*. They are one of the few small publishers still producing physical catalogues – which Michael said fits with the “old-fashioned” feel of their brand – and their generic looking proofs (most publishers produce full-colour physical proofs now complete with final cover imagery) are still popular with booksellers.

And while events were tricky for Europa because most of their authors are published in translation, they were an important component of both marketing to the trade, and reaching readers, for most other publishers.

Tent pole authors such as Sarah J Maas (Bloomsbury), Jodi Picoult (Ballantine Bantam Dell) and David Baldacci (Grand Central Publishing) are still toured extensively by their publishers. The big multinational publishers like HarperCollins, Penguin Random House and Simon & Schuster now have event departments dedicated to putting author tours together. Penguin Random House said that the decision to bring events in-house had been made because management weren’t happy with how booksellers and other stakeholders were organising events nor with the level of attendance. Now the in-house events team at PRH organises book with ticket events that guarantee an audience. They source the venues, liaise with bookselling partners and take responsibility for promotion.

For example the PRH events team arranged the bulk of the forty something events that Jodi Picoult undertook across the United States on publication of her last novel *Small Great Things*. All were book with ticket price events and most were arranged as in conversations with interlocutors who could draw on their own network of fans and contacts to increase

attendance. Jodi's publicist, Susan Corcoran, believes that these events played a big part in getting *Small Great Things* to number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Susan said it was the biggest tour she could remember an author undertaking.

The logistics of the tour were difficult and Jodi needed to have a publicist with her at all times. In this instance, media escorts weren't used and overall the use of media escorts (something rarely seen here in Australia because of our smaller population and fewer big cities) appears to have declined in the USA, perhaps in line with a decline in author tours overall. While Jodi Picoult is a compelling public speaker and number one bestseller and Sarah J Maas a hugely popular YA author with a massive social media following, Andy Dodds from Grand Central Publishing said that even David Baldacci's tours are less extensive now. David publishes two books a year and so Grand Central tend to focus most of their publicity efforts on only one book a year. Grand Central will usually arrange seven to eight bookshop events for David, across a variety of cities, ensuring face-time with booksellers and the servicing of David's fans. Andy said that getting audiences to events in New York and Washington D.C. is tough because there is so much competition and as a result they tend to travel him to smaller cities.

Jynne Dilling at Riverhead Books said that their publicity team base their touring decisions mostly on budget but also on interest from independent booksellers and festivals, taking into consideration an author's ability as a public speaker. As an imprint of Penguin Random House they can tap into the expertise of the groups dedicated events team. Jynne also drew my attention to another team within PRH that acts as a speaker's bureau, specifically seeking out paid speaking opportunities for authors. "This has become quite a lucrative revenue stream for us," said Jynne. Rather than putting all the work into raising an author's profile only to see monies flow to other agents, they organise university lectures, conferences and corporate speaking events, holding onto that money and maximising book sales too, which are generally not a priority for outside agents.

Mirtha Pena, a publicist at Atria Books (a division of Simon & Schuster), cited *The German Girl* by Armando Lucas as a title that received an author tour after getting a lot of early bookseller love. Armando Lucas already had a profile as the editor of *Spanish People* magazine and "this was enormously helpful," said Mirtha. The timeliness of the books central topic of refugees, the fact that the book revealed historical facts that hadn't been made public before, as well as the author's personal connection to the story and early noteworthy endorsements, all helped to generate plenty of media opportunities and create early bookseller love. "Word of mouth is still our best sales tool," said Mirtha.

In the worlds of genre and children's publishing thoughts on the viability of author tours varied. Some people felt they were more important than ever while others said they were in decline. The trends that appeared universal were the growth of the multi-author tour and the increasing importance of genre specific conferences.

Michelle Bayuk, Director of Marketing, Publicity and Social Media for Quarto's children's division, said that the internet and social media have allowed authors to communicate with

each other and form much stronger networks. “In the earlier part of my career I spent a big chunk of my time organising school visits,” said Michelle, “but authors can easily do this for themselves now or use an agency.” She said that school visits can be quite lucrative for children’s authors and that many authors now offer themselves in groups, to schools, libraries and bookshops. She has found that multi-author tours were more successful for children’s authors than solo ventures.

Elizabeth Mason, Director of Publicity at Bloomsbury USA, agreed that multi-author tours maximised audiences and made their publicity budget work harder. Elizabeth said they were touring authors more than ever (an *Atlantic* article of October 2015 by Noah Charney said that “the editors and publicists I spoke to for this article explained that, back in the day, publishers would send authors out on tour fairly regularly—the more events and cities covered, the better. But in this new, more austere era, publishers only regularly pay to send authors who are compelling public speakers, authors with large established audiences who are guaranteed to sell well and therefore cover expenses.”<sup>7</sup>) “As media opportunities dwindle,” Elizabeth said “we are using events more than ever to drive awareness and sales.” While Sarah J. Maas is sent on the road solo, most of Bloomsbury’s children’s authors are toured with other authors that are “on a similar profile and sales level.” Conferences and festivals are important vehicles too, with Bloomsbury Children’s ensuring a presence at annual events like Comic Con.

Pamela Spengler-Jaffee, Senior Director of Publicity and Brand Development for Avon Books/Harper Voyager/Impulse/Morrow at HarperCollins said that “the digital revolution has been a boon for romance and science fiction publishers.” Traditional media has always been snobbish about covering genre fiction but the internet has allowed readers to create their own communities that Pamela and her team can tap into. “Through Facebook and Goodreads we’ve been able to capture the email addresses of fans and create a thorough customer database,” said Pamela. Avon has been able to use that database to create their own large conference style events which they host in partnership with booksellers. They’ve also been able to map the demographics of romance fans so they know where they live. This helps them plan their multi-author tours and event as well as the solo tours they still create for their A-list authors. Pamela and her team organise branded multi-author conference style events a couple of times a year and move them around the country. They are streamed on Facebook Live, food is served and gift-bags handed out, and there is always a prize giveaway like a breakfast with one of the authors. It is about creating a memorable experience for the fans and helps the imprint introduce new authors. In Pamela’s experience most of the Avon and Impulse authors are happy to work together because HarperCollins has been able to articulate the public relations benefit. “I spend more time pitching general stories on the romance or science fiction genres these days,” Pamela said, “than I do on pitching individual titles for review or interview.”

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<sup>7</sup> ‘The Not Quite End of the Book Tour’, Noah Charney, *The Atlantic*, October 2015  
[www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/10/the-modern-face-of-book-tours/407641/](http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/10/the-modern-face-of-book-tours/407641/)

In the world of illustrated books Jessica Napp, Associate Director of Publicity at Rizzoli Books, said that events remain important for them too. “We put on 500 author events per year and very few of these events happen in bookstores,” she said. Instead they try to host events that make sense for the individual books – interiors in design stores, fashion in clothing stores – whilst always ensuring that books are on sale. Book launches, Jessica said, “aren’t really a thing anymore,” a sentiment reiterated by most of her American publishing compatriots. Launches are seen as an author’s choice and domain. “Sometimes we might provide them with books,” said Jessica, “but we don’t have the budget to host those kinds of parties these days.”

And while the decline of bricks and mortars bookstores in the United States means that publishers have sought to broaden the opportunities for authors to connect face-to-face with readers, it has had other effects too. Point-of-sale, traditionally produced for in-store displays, appeared to be a source of some conflict. Michelle Bayuk, Director of Marketing, Publicity and Social Media for Quarto’s children’s division, said that postcards, posters and bookmarks are mainly produced to satisfy authors but are rarely used by booksellers. Quarto is trying to produce as little as possible and Michelle thought authors could be encouraged to create point-of-sales themselves.

And ever tightening budgets came up again and again. Only Penguin Random House said that they’d increased their staff numbers within their publicity and marketing teams while everyone else said that they were working with less people and less money. Print advertising was seen as expensive, ineffective and as something to avoid. The rise of Amazon, Google and Facebook has meant that publishers have access to more data on book consumers than ever before, an advantage that is maximised by advertising and promoting through those same channels. Grand Central Publishing, a division of Hachette, was the only publisher that I met with that said they still actively sought to advertise in newspapers and magazines. Andy Dodds said that “when I was at HarperCollins we did very little traditional advertising but here at Hachette it’s a lot more common. We reserve Facebook advertising for the mid-list but we do buy a lot of space on NPR and we’ve recently started sponsoring podcasts and radio shows too.”

Across the multi-nationals blockbuster authors usually still receive a radio, print and TV advertising campaign. Ballantine Bantam Dell made a point of advertising their brand name authors on television while many publishers found advertising on NPR effective.

On print advertising Kristin Fassler, Vice President of Marketing at Ballantine Bantam Dell, said “that if we could do almost none, we would, but some authors and agents demand it.” She said that when she was working at HarperCollins a decade ago they researched the impact of print advertising on book sales and found that it was negligible. “Publishers don’t have the budget for the kinds of blanket advertising that is effective for big brands,” she said. “All the value is in earned media - which is harder than ever to get - and in promoting directly to the trade.” Andy Dodds said that Hachette’s view was that traditional advertising was part of an overall campaign. He quoted the old marketing principle that consumers need to encounter a product seven times before they feel compelled to buy it. Jynne Dilling at

Riverhead, however, agreed with her PRH colleagues. Riverhead does almost no print advertising for their titles. “We will do some for the new Paula Hawkins novel as part of our overall marketing push,” said Jynne.” Pretty much all of Riverhead’s marketing budget was now spent on online advertising, whether that was banner advertisements in trade journals or advertising on Facebook and Instagram. “We work closely with publicity to publish our Facebook advertisements when media is hitting,” she said. “We’ll take a brilliant review quote, create four different advertisements with them, put them out, and within an hour we know what is working and what isn’t.” Riverhead love online advertisements not only for the data they’re able to collect but also for the immediacy of them; with other forms of advertising there is no way to tell whether they have worked or not. “We can explain our position to authors and agents,” she said, “because we have the data to back it up.”

In many ways the explosion in online and social advertising, amplified by the rise of handheld devices, has been an exciting development for book marketers: digital ads cost less, are quick to produce and they are way more targeted.

Another beneficiary of the digital revolution has been audio book publishers. Audible, the audio book division of Amazon, has grown by 40% year on year, with no signs of slowing down. “Radio is very important to us,” said Robyn Torkewitz Fink, Creative Manager of Social Media at Audible. “We have a symbiotic relationship because of the crossover of listeners.” As a result Audible spends money on radio advertising and the occasional television advertisement too, but they never advertise in print. They see securing print coverage as the responsibility of the publicity team.

Audible recently merged their advertising and social divisions. The focus for the social team was previously on communicating to their existing subscribers (Audible runs on a monthly subscription model similar to streaming services like Netflix and Spotify) and on providing additional content that would get them excited about new releases. Now the company is switching their focus to recruiting new subscribers. 92% of Audible’s subscribers are on Facebook and Audible itself has over three million followers. “That is where we’re spending most of our money,” said Robyn, “though Instagram is growing too. The challenge for our team is that social media is made for pictures and words and only 10% of video uploaded is ever watched with the sound on. There is no social media platform yet for sharing audio files. We’ve even discussed the option of creating one.”

Sharable content isn’t a problem for illustrated book publishers who have a wealth of image based content to pepper their social media feeds with. “Our social media feed contains a lot of repurposed publicity content,” said Mamie VanLengen, Digital and Social Media Manager for adult books at Abrams. “But we also feature event listings, extracts and images from our books, alongside content we share from our authors.” Mamie said that while some publishing houses were shy about sharing content because they don’t want to giveaway what they could potentially sell, Abrams had no problem with it. She also said that many of their authors have significant social media followings (social media statistics usually form part of an acquisition proposal now) and sharing content has helped Abrams to grow their followers. Mamie came to her role from a traditional marketing background and her colleague Patricia McNamara,



the Digital and Social Media Manager for their Children's division, from magazines. Their career trajectory reflects that of many others I met that are in charge of company social accounts. They came to their roles organically, though in-house experience and interest, rather than via any specific course of study. And while social media seems to sit mostly within marketing teams, it is sometimes handled by publicity too, because so much of the work is author facing. It is clear that authors who have built a distinct brand and an engaged social media following now have an advantage over those that haven't (some publishers, like HarperCollins, have invested in workshops for authors to show them how to build their online presence). For some publishers building an online community they can direct market to as helped to fill the gap left by the decline in traditional publicity opportunities. Riverhead Books, for example, sees branding as an investment and a priority. They have replaced their seasonal print catalogues with unique branded content like jewellery and street art and they work with the one in-house art director to ensure all their books have a recognisable Riverhead look.

And Jessica Napp at Rizzoli said that she had found that targeted digital advertising could sometimes do the work that publicity once did. "I worked on a book about the Pacific Crest Trail, that included an introduction by Cheryl Strayed," she said, "but I simply could not get any publicity for it. Instead we spent \$500 on a targeted Facebook ad and it worked." The beauty of social advertising was that 'a small amount of money and time invested can often reap significant rewards.'

Many American publishers bemoaned the fact that outdoor advertising was so much more expensive in the United States than in the UK and Australia where it is fairly commonly used to advertise books. Outside of publicity and events digital advertising was definitely the preferred way to reach consumers and the trade now. In line with worldwide marketing trends display advertising had declined in importance, with only a few publishers saying they still made it a priority. Outside of trade sites such as *Publisher's Weekly*, *Kirkus* and *Shelf Awareness*, Facebook, Instagram and Google Adwords were the sites mentioned most often. Mary-Beth Jarrad, Sales & Marketing Director at NYU Press, said "of the digital marketing we do Google Adwords is the most effective as we've seen those ads translate into direct clicks to buy better than any others. They are also inexpensive because they are sold at auction." Renee Senogles, Publicity and Marketing Manager for Hardie Grant in San Francisco, said digital advertising gives them "more bank for our buck, so to speak, and the ability for consumers to more immediately translate interest into purchase thanks to online retail." Publishers can also reach readers by producing or contributing content for targeted email newsletters. Social media influencers were a priority for everyone too. "One of our books recently received a shout-out on Twitter by Arianna Huffington," said Mary-Beth, "and that had more impact than the cover of the *New York Times* Book Review."

While Audible was the only publisher I met with actively paying influencers to feature their titles (Audible also benefits from having celebrity voice artists, some of whom are happy to post about their relationship with Audible on their own social accounts) all publishers are taking time to pursue influencers, an activity that blurs the line between publicity and marketing. At Audible this was being handled by the digital marketing team as a priority to

recruit new subscribers. “Paid or unpaid the most important thing is to strive for authenticity,” said Robyn Torkewitz. “We are looking for social media stars with a genuine love of audio books.”

At print publishers a lot of the onus was on authors to mobilise their own contacts and a big part of a marketer’s or publicist’s job now is advising authors on how to set up or improve their social sites and seek endorsements from influencers. And, of course, as an author’s existing social footprint is increasingly taken into consideration before their book is even acquired, meaning publicity and marketing teams are involved earlier and earlier in a books lifespan.

“The biggest change I’ve seen,” said Mary-Beth Jarrad from NYU Press, “is that right from the commissioning stage we are considering a potential author’s connections and their ability to promote themselves.” At Abrams the digital team are involved from the commissioning stage. They collate data on the social reach of authors, burrowing down to look not only at their numbers but also at their engagement. From Abrams perspective it is personalities with engaged fans that generate the best book sales. Mamie VanLangen gave the example of music journalist Shea Serrano who has a large and passionate Twitter following. Serrano’s book *The Rap Yearbook* sold out from Barnes & Noble on pre-orders alone and that feat helped Abrams generate additional media coverage for the book.

Pre-order campaigns are very common these days – both in Australia and the United States – and work best when an author has a committed group of followers that they can directly market to. A recent success story in Australia was Scott Pape for his book *The Barefoot Investor*. Pape gave readers who pre-ordered his book additional content; something that Abrams says has proved quite popular in driving their pre-order campaigns too.

One of my big takeaways from my study tour was the increasing role the author plays in publicising and marketing their own book. Authors now have the opportunity to earn and own their own media and while the argument could be made that they’re doing more of the legwork that their increasingly stretched publishers did before, this has also given the industry more flexibility and transparency.

Other conclusions I reached are that:

- Marketing and publicity activities for brand name bestselling authors remain largely unchanged apart from the addition of online publicity and digital advertising to the overall mix
- The once symbiotic relationship between print media and book publishers is now irretrievably broken as the conversation around books moves online
- Marketers can now do more advertising and promotion for books with less money but the man hours required to do so are significant. This is an ever increasing challenge for professionals within the industry as publishing houses cut costs to deal with the changing retail environment such as the deep discounting demanded by Amazon in the USA and the downward price pressure on books in Australia

- Trends toward moving events in-house, book with ticket price events and multi-author tours and conferences. These trends are picking up speed in Australia too. Bloomsbury Australia has launched a series of in-house events under the Bloomsbury Institute Banner. Allen & Unwin have now held three successful YA Fan Fiction events
- The influence of bloggers has waned, eclipsed now by social media influencers in perceived value. Publishers who are still sending review copies to bloggers continue to do so to encourage reviews on Amazon and Goodreads
- Publishers pursuing business partnerships with other brands whose audiences cross over with theirs like Avon Books partnering with a wedding company.
- Building anticipation for books with pre-publication marketing and publicity campaigns now that building pre-orders is such an effective way of maximising first week sales
- Traditional publishers continue to support bricks and mortar bookstores and their influence as tastemakers
- Children's publishing continues its focus on reaching out to schools and libraries, the tastemakers in their area
- Social media has been a boon for YA books and genre fiction, allowing them to bypass the snobbishness of traditional media and talk directly to readers
- And that publishers' shouldn't be shy about advising their authors on what they can do to promote themselves and their work to an increasingly splintered audience that is still hungry for that personal connection with writers.