



HOW TO MARKET OR DISAPPEAR SEMINAR **1 February 2009 Sydney**

This one-day seminar on how to market yourself as an author was held at The Hughenden on Sunday 1 Feb 2009, and I went to Sydney to attend. Speakers included:

- Hazel Edwards (author)
- Christine Keyes (CoastKids magazine editor, media consultant)
- Libby Hathorn (author, multimedia writer, film producer)
- Christopher Cheng (author, co-RA SCBWI A&NZ)
- Susanne Gervay (author, co-RA SCBWI A&NZ)
- Sophia Whitfield (publisher, New Frontier)
- Ruth Franklin (bookseller, Books and Beyond)

The day kicked off with a welcome from Chris and Susanne.

Session 1

The Business of Books: the author's perspective

Hazel Edwards

You are a solo operator in the business of creativity and ideas. You are a business. You should belong to professional organisations. You need a business card – if it has visuals, all the better. You need bookmarks, posters etc to hand out. If your publisher doesn't do these, maybe you should arrange it. Even your invoice is an opportunity for publicity – have your photo and your most recent books listed on it. You definitely need a website – see it as an electronic brochure that you can refer people to. Make sure it's updated regularly.

Add a photo of your most recent publication to your email tag (in low res!)

You are the brand name for your book – you have to learn to speak in public, or on the phone for interviews. You'll need a couple of quirky anecdotes to illustrate, quickly, points that you are making. Consider doing a course in interviewing skills. Prepare some answers to FAQ beforehand – post these on your website also.

You are short of time – don't ever waste materials, re-purpose them. Turn ideas into scripts, articles. Write fiction and non-fiction from the same research.

Consider having several different bios ready on hand: e.g. ones slanted at children's publications, business etc. Also bios of different lengths. Organise your CV under different headings (e.g. children's, scripts, journalism) rather than a long, long list of publications by date.

If you give school talks, link the titles of your books to certain talks. Develop some activities to go with the talk. If a talk seems to be beginning to slump, you can introduce an activity. Props are also useful for talks – Hazel has a large-size hippo puppet.

Titles and tags for your books are important – snappy/quirky ones attract people to your website.

Research – how far do you go?? (Hazel went to Antarctica!) Remember, travel for research is a tax deductible expense.

Cost your time. What do you need to be paid to make a project cost-effective? You need regular, bread-and-butter projects, but you also need “soul” projects, just for yourself. It helps to sleep with your accountant (note: Hazel is married to hers!)

Retain as many rights to your work in your contracts as you can. You can ask for your rights back if a work is going out-of-print.

Session 2

Susanne Gervay

Belong to organisations such as Jacketflap.

Get links on your website (eg to SCBWI)

Write articles about the process of writing a book, and send it to places like the School Library Association.

You **MUST** have a website!

Teaching notes are essential for the secondary market – if your publisher doesn't do this, maybe you should.

Session 3

Libby Hathorn

Always be aware of looking for ideas wherever you go. You never know when it's an IDEAS moment. You may use the idea years later. So carry a notebook!

Networking is very important – attend seminars, conferences, meetings. Work the room.

Don't just think of a book for your idea: think of docos, stage, film.

Libby screened a doco “100 Views Kathmandu” of her journey to Kathmandu to teach poetry and painting to teachers at a school in Kathmandu.

Session 4: Panel

Ruth Franklin: bookseller

Ruth wants kids to be passionate about books! Awards such as the Koala and Bilby Awards show what kids want.

Much depends on your publisher and how they promote you – booksellers are the last gasp!

Try to get your books into schools – they buy class sets.

Learn what is needed in the school curriculum and see if you can craft a story around that need.

The cover of a book can make or break it.

Multimedia tie-ins are great! E.g., the Making Tracks books direct kids to a website.

Christine Keyes, magazine publisher and media consultant

It's seen as "un-Australian" to promote yourself – and it's not easy. But it's vital to the success of this book, and the next book ... and it takes time and effort.

Ask yourself, "What's the point?" of publicity. Basically, you want to sell books AND promote yourself. People will buy books by someone they've heard of. Approach local media – any place you've ever lived will claim you as their own. Send media releases to the local newspapers. Remember, media needs an angle. Give them a story: your new book, how you came to write it, anecdotes about the process.

If interviews are coming up: practise. Think of questions that might be asked and prepare answers. Think of questions you mightn't want to answer and plan how to avoid them.

Sophia Whitfield, publisher New Frontier

Mainly publishes picture books. When NF sets out to market a book, they look for an objective (apart from selling books!).

Sophia gave a case study of a first-time picture book author. The objective was to get this author noticed. Review copies sent out; then editorial/media releases sent to newspapers/local radio stations in every place he'd lived. A local launch was organised, with a guaranteed large crowd – this also got coverage.

Christopher Cheng

Chris spoke on the new SCBWI A&NZ website. Read your newsletters! (Chris can tell who opened them, who didn't, what you read, how many links you investigated.)

Send Chris or Susanne an update of the books you've had published.

Have your website linked to SCBWI.

Get yourself on the Speakers Directory.

The day finished off with a champagne launch of two books in the Making Tracks series:

Felicity Pullman's *Turning the Page*

Susanne Gervay's *Daisy Sunshine*

And a fairly raucous massed singing of "I am woman, hear me roar" (read *Daisy Sunshine* to find out why!

If anyone wants further info, please email me or phone. Best wishes to all.

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