

**Dutch Foundation for Literature**

**8<sup>th</sup> International Non-Fiction Conference**

**28 & 29 January 2011, Amsterdam**

**Quality Non-Fiction in the Digital Era**

## MODERATOR

### **Maarten Asscher** (Athenaeum Booksellers, the Netherlands)

Maarten Asscher is managing director of Athenaeum Booksellers in Amsterdam. He is also a writer and a poetry translator. From 1998 to 2003 he was head of the Arts Department at the Dutch Ministry of Culture. Trained as a copyright lawyer, he began his career at the literary publishing house J.M. Meulenhoff, where he worked from 1980 to 1998. He is currently researching a PhD thesis on the relation between incarceration and authorship in European literary history since the Romantics.

## SPEAKERS

### **Harry Blom** (Springer, USA)

Harry Blom studied astrophysics at Utrecht University and obtained his doctorate from Leiden University on the subject of gamma-ray sources in space. After completing follow-up studies at postdoctoral level in Puebla, Mexico, he returned to the Netherlands to become an editor at Kluwer Academic Publishers. There he developed the company's books and journals portfolio in astronomy. In 2004, shortly after the merger of the academic branches of Kluwer and Springer, he moved to New York, where he was appointed head of the physics and astronomy editorial department. Among other things, he expanded the popular science book list for Springer and since last fall he has been working part-time in São Paulo, developing Springer's publishing activities in a rapidly emerging market.

### **Marcus Chown** (author, UK)

Marcus Chown is an award-winning writer and broadcaster. Formerly a radio astronomer at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, he is currently cosmology consultant for the British weekly science magazine *New Scientist*. His books include *Quantum Theory Cannot Hurt You*, *Felicity Frobisher and the Three-Headed Aldebaran Dust Devil* and *We Need to Talk About Kelvin*, which was shortlisted for the 2010 Royal Society Book Prize.

### **Peter Collingridge** (Enhanced Editions, UK)

Peter Collingridge is a publishing entrepreneur whose work at the maverick edge of publishing began at Canongate Books, where he spearheaded the firm's move into digital in

1998. In 2005 he set up Apt Studio, a consultancy that advises publishers on digital technology and strategy, and in 2008 he co-founded Enhanced Editions to drive innovation in publishing and to help shape the future of the book. Peter was named by *The Evening Standard* as one of London's fifty most influential people in publishing and he was shortlisted for the British Council's 2009 Young Publishing Entrepreneur of the Year. He has an MA in literature from Edinburgh University and has delivered a number of Keynote presentations at publishing and digital conferences, from O'Reilly's Tools of Change in New York 2010 to the Non/Fiction Fair in Moscow and Madrid's ANELE textbook conference.

**Ramy Habeeb** (Kotobarabia, Egypt)

In 2004 Ramy Habeeb established Kotobarabia.com, the first Arabic language e-book publishing house in the Middle East. To date, Kotobarabia has acquired the e-rights to over 1,400 Arab authors and has digitized more than 8,000 titles. In 2007 Ramy was named Egyptian Young Publisher of the Year by the British Council.

**Nicky Harman** (translator, UK)

Nicky Harman translates contemporary Chinese literature and teaches translation at Imperial College London. She has translated a number of prize-winning authors, ranging from Xinran to Hong Ying, Han Dong and, most recently, Zhang Ling. She translates both fiction and non-fiction, poetry and prose. She is also involved in a number of initiatives that bring publishers and translators together and helps to promote the training of new translators from Chinese. Her projects include the website Paper-Republic.org, the Translation Summer School at the University of East Anglia and the recently established mentorship scheme for new translators run by the UK Translators Association.

**Sara Lloyd** (Pan Macmillan, UK)

Sara holds a cross-divisional position at Pan Macmillan, the fifth biggest UK trade publisher, and is responsible for developing and implementing a holistic digital strategy and publishing programme for the group. Her remit is to grow the company's digital business, shaping, managing and developing all the digital requirements of the business today and for the foreseeable future. It is her job to ensure that Pan Macmillan has the correct legal framework, commercial set-up and infrastructural and operational support to deliver on its digital needs throughout the business, while balancing investment and strategic planning with the requirement to grow immediate revenues. Sara's role covers e-books, digital audio and web

development and her team also facilitates digital product innovation right across the company. Sara is Chair of the UK Publishing Association's Digital Director's group. Her team's blog on all matters digital can be found at <http://thedigitalist.net>

**Jos de Mul** (philosopher, the Netherlands)

Jos de Mul is Full Professor in Philosophy of Man and Culture at the Faculty of Philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam, and scientific director of the research institute Philosophy of Information and Communication Technology (φICT). He has also taught at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) and Fudan University (Shanghai). From 2007-2010 he was president of the International Association for Aesthetics. Among his books are *Romantic Desire in (Post)Modern Art and Philosophy* (State University of New York Press, 1999), *The Tragedy of Finitude. Dilthey's Hermeneutics of Life* (Yale University Press, 2004) and *Cyberspace Odyssey* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010). *Cyberspace Odyssey* won the Socrates Award for the best Dutch philosophical book of 2003.

**Richard Nash** (Cursor, USA)

Richard Nash is an independent publishing entrepreneur who is currently launching Cursor, a start-up portfolio of social publishing imprints the first of which, Red Lemona.de, will launch in 2011. For most of the past decade he ran the iconic indie Soft Skull Press, for which he was awarded the Association of American Publishers' Miriam Bass Award for Creativity in Independent Publishing in 2005. In 2006, *Publishers Weekly* picked him as one of the ten editors to watch for in the coming decade. This year the *Utne Reader* named him as one of Fifty Visionaries Changing Your World and Mashable.com picked him as the #1 Twitter User Changing the Shape of Publishing.

**Chad Post** (Open Letter Books / Three Percent, USA)

Chad Post is the director of Open Letter Books, a relatively new press at the University of Rochester dedicated to publishing contemporary literature from all over the world. He is also the managing editor of Three Percent, a blog and review site that promotes literature in translation and is home to both the Translation Database and the Best Translated Book Awards. His articles and book reviews have appeared in a range of publications including *The Believer*, *Publishing Perspectives*, the *Wall Street Journal's* culture blog and *Quarterly Conversation*.

**Henry Volans** (Faber & Faber, UK)

Henry Volans is head of Faber Digital, the new division at Faber & Faber responsible for developing digital products and services. After joining Faber from Canongate in Edinburgh he worked as its non-fiction editor and audio publisher, as well as establishing Faber's debut e-book programme.

PARTICIPANTS

**James Boekbinder** (the Netherlands)

James Boekbinder is active as an editor, information architect, content strategist and filmmaker for clients including multinational companies, cultural institutions, non-profits, publishers and authors. His work covers a broad area, including visualization, editorial formulas, texts and films for websites, intranets, magazines, television, games and books. He also supports teams in the creation of new product concepts for mobile and other applications.

**Susan Breeuwsma** (WPG Publishers, the Netherlands)

Susan Breeuwsma is Manager of Commercial Services at the business development department of WPG Publishers, one of the three biggest book publishing companies in the Netherlands. After several years in the publishing business, first in sales and subsequently as an editor and as a project manager, she became responsible for the development of a holistic e-workflow for all the publishing houses belonging to WPG, aiming to produce consistent e-pubs from InDesign. As manager of commercial services she advises on digital business strategy and facilitates digital product innovation across the company. She is also responsible for several service departments, including applications, database marketing and customer service. Her latest challenge was to investigate the possibility of launching an industry-wide digital platform for the Netherlands.

**Dick Broer** (Dutch Foundation for Literature, the Netherlands)

Dick Broer studied French language and literature at the University of Amsterdam. After graduating he worked as a publisher for poetry foundation Perdu and as editor-in-chief of the computer magazine *PC-Active*. Since 2001 he has been responsible for the publications and websites of the Dutch Foundation for Literature. He also builds and maintains websites for the

European Advertising Academy ([europeanadvertisingacademy.org](http://europeanadvertisingacademy.org)) and Réseau Européen des Centres Internationaux de Traducteurs littéraires ([www.re-cit.eu](http://www.re-cit.eu)).

**Greetje Heemskerk** (Dutch Foundation for Literature, the Netherlands)

Greetje Heemskerk graduated in modern Dutch literature at the University of Amsterdam. After completing her studies she worked for several years as a curator at the Literary Museum in The Hague. She is one of the founders of the literary-historical magazine *De Parelduiker*. Greetje has worked for the Dutch Foundation for Literature since 2002, first mainly organizing grants and symposia for biographers, and now as head of the author policy department.

**Haye Koningsveld** (Ambo|Anthos, the Netherlands)

Haye Koningsveld is publisher of non-fiction at Ambo|Anthos Publishers. He graduated in philosophy and comparative literature, and worked at the Department of Political Philosophy at the University of Nijmegen. After having worked as a freelance editor for various publishing houses, he found his first job in publishing at Prometheus, then moved to Academic Service for a year before joining Ambo|Anthos in 2000. He publishes non-fiction for the general market, with a strong focus on philosophy, history and politics – as well as excursions into true crime and pop music.

**Grégory Martin** (Denoël, France)

Grégory Martin is non-fiction editor at Denoël. He deals with both French and foreign books and sometimes acts as a translator from English to French. He studied contemporary history at the Sorbonne, then took a postgraduate degree in Publishing Matters (University Paris 13). He joined Denoël ten years ago as a trainee before becoming a copyeditor and now editor.

**Suzanne Meeuwissen** (Dutch Foundation for Literature, the Netherlands)

It was Suzanne Meeuwissen's affinity for literary magazines that prompted her to join the staff of the Dutch Foundation for Literature, where until recently she was involved in providing grants to Dutch publishers. A factor common to both is the limited marketability of important titles that foster the diversity and quality of Dutch literature. As well as magazines and the website Schwob.nl, her work at the Foundation currently focuses on new developments in the book trade, whether commercial or artistic (with new forms of literature such as the blog biography). She was formerly an editor at a renowned scientific research institute and edited a restaurant guide. After studying Dutch and comparative literature at the

University of Utrecht she began her career as an editor at Kwadraat, a small independent literary publishing house in Utrecht.

**Edward Nawotka** (*Publishing Perspectives*, USA)

Ed Nawotka is the founder and editor-in-chief of *Publishing Perspectives*, an online magazine for the international publishing industry that has been called ‘the BBC of the book world’. Prior to launching *Publishing Perspectives*, he worked as book columnist for *Bloomberg News* and as daily news editor of *Publishers Weekly*. He has also served as the literary director of the Texas Book Festival and as a judge for various book awards, as well as working as a foreign correspondent, a bookseller, literary magazine editor and advertising copywriter. Ed’s reviews, essays and reporting have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *The Guardian*, *Travel + Leisure*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Budget Travel*, *The New Statesman*, *USA Today* and *People*. He has appeared as a guest on television and radio programs for various broadcasters including NPR, PRI, the BBC, and C-SPAN, and has lectured at numerous universities and institutions. He currently serves on the Advisory Council of the University of Texas Libraries.

**Eppo van Nispen tot Sevenaer** (Collective Promotion for the Dutch Book, the Netherlands)

Eppo van Nispen tot Sevenaer had a successful career in broadcasting, becoming one of the first to use interactive formats. He then decided to dedicate his knowledge of media and how people use them to the future of libraries. He set up the highly acclaimed DOK Library Concept Center in Delft, a town that is home to one of the best technical universities in the world. DOK’s mission is to create the world’s most modern library. In 2008 DOK was chosen by international experts as the most innovative of all libraries worldwide and in 2009 it was named the best library in the Netherlands. Today Eppo is the director of Collective Promotion for the Dutch Book, a foundation that brings together publishers, booksellers and libraries with the aim of encouraging the habits of book reading and book buying.

**Emile Op de Coul** (Querido, the Netherlands)

Emile Op de Coul graduated in Film and Television Studies in Utrecht, specializing in dramaturgy. He spent a year in Los Angeles and studied in other cities including Glasgow. He worked as an editor for a publisher of theatre and film books, and for the NCRV television network, where for eight years he was responsible for all multimedia publications of radio and television programmes, including DVDs and CD-ROMs. Since 2008 he has worked at

Querido where, in his current post as manager rights and new business, he is responsible for acquiring translation, film and theatre rights and the development of new business, which includes apps for the iPhone and iPad.

**Tiziano Perez** (Dutch Foundation for Literature, the Netherlands)

Tiziano Perez graduated in Italian and English language and literature. He worked first at the University of Amsterdam and then as a programme maker at political and cultural centre De Balie in Amsterdam before joining the Dutch Foundation for Literature. He is co-founder and coordinator of the project Amsterdam City of Refuge, which offers a safe haven to persecuted writers. Since 1998 he has been responsible for organizing international literary events for the NLPVF, recently renamed the Dutch Foundation for Literature, where he is currently head of Promotion and Information.

**Angus Phillips** (Brookes University, UK)

Angus Phillips is director of the Oxford International Centre for Publishing Studies at Oxford Brookes University. He has degrees from Oxford and Warwick Universities, as well as many years' experience in the publishing industry that includes running a trade and reference list at Oxford University Press. He has acted as consultant to a variety of publishing companies and trained publishing professionals from the UK and overseas in editorial work, marketing and management. Angus is the author, with Giles Clark, of *Inside Book Publishing* (2008); and the editor, with Bill Cope, of *The Future of the Book in the Digital Age* (2006) and *The Future of the Academic Journal* (2009). He is editor-in-chief of the publishing journal *Logos*.

**Erik Rigtters** ([www.ebook.nl](http://www.ebook.nl), the Netherlands)

Erik Rigtters is the manager of [ebook.nl](http://www.ebook.nl), the largest specialist e-book retailer in the Netherlands. For the past ten years, [www.ebook.nl](http://www.ebook.nl) has devoted itself to the cause of the Dutch e-book, arguing strongly in favour of increasing the supply by giving practical help to publishers in making e-books available. Erik began attending the School for Bookselling and Publishing in 1994 and at the same time started work at trade publisher Prometheus Bert Bakker. In January 2007 he joined [www.ebook.nl](http://www.ebook.nl) and the e-books department of the publishing group NDC|VBK.

**Paul Rutten** (the Netherlands)

Paul Rutten has worked as a part-time professor at Leiden University, heading the MA programme Book and Digital Media Studies. He specializes in the consequences of

digitization for media and publishing, concentrating among other things on the book publishing industry and scholarly communication. Part of his research, on behalf of OAPEN, a project funded by the EU Content Plus programme, focuses on the future of monograph publishing in the humanities and social sciences. Since 2010 he has been visiting professor in Creative Industries and Innovation at Antwerp University. For the past three years he has also operated as an independent researcher, working for private and public clients on issues such as digitization, cross media and creative industries. Before joining Leiden University he was visiting professor in Cultural Industries at Erasmus University, senior researcher and consultant at TNO and professor in Media and Entertainment Industries at INHOLLAND University for Professional Education in Haarlem.

**Jeroen Sondervan** (Amsterdam University Press, the Netherlands)

Jeroen Sondervan is humanities publisher at Amsterdam University Press. He studied Media and Information Management at the Hogeschool van Amsterdam (HvA) and Media and Culture at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). As well as publishing paper books, he works on digitization projects, Open Access and e-journals at AUP. For the online *Journal of Archaeology in the Low Countries* he is currently involved in a long-term project concerning ‘enriched publications’ in online scientific journals.

**René van Stipriaan** (Digital Library of Dutch Literature, the Netherlands)

René van Stipriaan’s many interests include the Dutch Golden Age, the Italian Trecento and the world of Rock ‘n’ Roll. Over the past few years he has compiled a number of well-received collections of eyewitness reports: *Eyewitnesses to World History* (with Geert Mak), *Eyewitnesses to the Golden Age* and *Eyewitnesses to Rock ‘n’ Roll*. In 2002 he published *The Full Life*, a richly illustrated history of sixteenth- to eighteenth-century Dutch literature. He is currently working on a book about the role of propaganda during the Dutch Revolt. René studied Dutch language and literature at the University of Amsterdam and gained his doctorate in 1995 on the subject of seventeenth-century Dutch comic theatre. He then worked for several years in publishing. Since 1998 he has been responsible for the structure and content of the much-visited Digital Library of Dutch Literature ([www.dbnl.nl](http://www.dbnl.nl)).

**Daan Stoffelsen** (Athenaeum.nl, the Netherlands)

Daan Stoffelsen is the editor of Athenaeum.nl, Athenaeum Boekhandel’s website. Athenaeum.nl’s primary focus lies on content rather than commerce and it publishes daily

reviews, movies and the latest news about events in the literary world. Every evening at 8pm the homepage of the site shifts to another part of Athenaeum.nl, where a new, lengthy prepublication, theme page or interview can be found, focusing on one book or author only. Step by step, this approach is proving commercially successful. In 2005 Stoffelsen founded Recensieweb.nl, a Dutch review website. He also reviews literature for that site and, on a freelance basis, for the daily *NRC Handelsblad*. Since 2010 he has been active as an editor at the Dutch literary magazine *De Revisor*, the first magazine in the Netherlands to publish original prose and poetry exclusively online, at revisor.nl.

**Martien de Vletter** (SUN, the Netherlands)

Martien de Vletter worked at the Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAI) in Rotterdam for more than ten years and since 2008 she has been publisher of architecture books at SUN in Amsterdam. SUN works with and for an international market, and since 2008 it has published eighty books in the fields of architecture, urban development and landscape. Since 2010, SUN has published the international journal *A10 New European Architecture*. Martien has also written books herself, on topics including Dutch modernist J.J.P. Oud, Dutch architecture in the 1970s, and architecture and urban development in Indonesia.

**Lisa Liping Zhang** (Shanda Literature Corporation, China)

Lisa Liping Zhang has a background in both traditional and digital publishing. She worked for an international publishing group as its chief representative in China for more than six years. A year and a half ago she joined Shanda Literature Corporation (SDL), China's leading online literature publisher, as director of its overseas department. More information about Shanda can be found at [www.sd-wx.com.cn](http://www.sd-wx.com.cn). She also has experience as a diplomat, a government employee and a teacher. She gained a Master's Degree in Public Policy from Georgetown University in America.

## ORGANIZERS

**Jája Holišová** (Dutch Foundation for Literature, the Netherlands)

Jája Holišová studied German and History of the Press, Propaganda and Public Opinion at the University of Amsterdam. For many years she worked as a tourist guide and co-authored a number of travel guides. Six years ago, after an in-between career as a valuer of antique

jewellery, she became personal assistant to Maarten Valken. She is responsible for the organizational and practical aspects of the conference.

**Margje Scheepsma** (Dutch Foundation for Literature, the Netherlands)

Margje Scheepsma is a postgraduate student of comparative literature at Utrecht University. She assists Maarten Valken at the non-fiction department of the Dutch Foundation for Literature.

**Victor Schiferli** (the Netherlands)

Victor Schiferli studied Dutch at the University of Amsterdam and worked as a policy adviser at the NLPVF (1992-2001) and as editor of Dutch fiction at De Bezige Bij (2001-2007). He made his debut as a poet in 2000 with *At an Open Window*, which was nominated for that year's C. Buddingh' Prize. It was followed in 2005 by the collection *Vanished Waiters* and in 2008 by *Speech in a Bush*, nominated for the Hugues C. Pernath Prize. He has compiled a number of anthologies and was editor of the literary magazine *Bunker Hill*. He is now a freelance critic and journalist for newspapers, magazines and websites, including that of Cees Nooteboom ([www.ceesnooteboom.com](http://www.ceesnooteboom.com)).

**Maarten Valken** (Dutch Foundation for Literature, the Netherlands)

Maarten Valken has been non-fiction specialist at the Dutch Foundation for Literature (formerly the NLPVF) since 1997 and head of translation policy since 2010. He graduated in history and worked in the History Department at the University of Amsterdam before becoming an editor at Agon Publishers, mainly publishing humanities in translation.

**Liz Waters** (the Netherlands)

Liz Waters graduated in philosophy and theology at the University of Manchester and worked at a literary agency in Amsterdam before becoming a freelance translator, mainly of quality non-fiction books.



**Friday 9.30am - 12.30 pm**

**Where are we now?**

**Maarten Valken** - Welcome everybody, or almost everybody, a few are still on their way, held up by snow in New York, but I expect them to land right now and to drop in here at any moment. So finally we can start this conference. I say finally, because it has taken us two years to prepare. I started talking with some of you about it two years ago. I have to blame myself first of all, of course, for it taking so long, but I can also blame the merger we were in. For the past couple of years our foundation has been involved in a time-consuming merger. So just a few words to explain to you what this means and to tell you about the foundation. As most of you probably know, the foundation I used to work for, the Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature, mainly focused on support for foreign publishers of Dutch literature in translation. As it happens there was also another literature foundation in Holland. We have always been a country of many foundations; for almost every type of art there is a foundation. This other literary foundation was mainly concerned with Dutch authors and supporting translators into Dutch. So it makes sense to work together and we will actually move in two weeks from now to our new offices under the new name of the Dutch Foundation for Literature. I really think, especially for instance in the field of translation, that it will be fruitful, that we will be stronger and work better together translating into and out of Dutch. But in fact I should blame the theme of this conference most of all, because when I started talking about it two years ago to my usual network of publishers, editors, translators, authors, the reaction was mainly: very boring subject, we don't know anything about it, we don't want to talk about it. Fortunately that has changed over the past two years.

The idea of this conference, as you can see, is to have a small room, with forty people at the most, publishers, authors, translators, booksellers, critics, people who are in the book publishing business but who don't normally or necessarily have time to talk with each other at any length. This always worked very well in the past. We still have a small group, we will still focus on discussion as much as possible, but the participants are quite different from those of the previous conferences. So for instance there's only one Dutch author. I'm very happy he's here, but I couldn't find any other non-fiction authors in Holland thinking about digital publishing, open to it. The same goes for translators from Dutch. We are happy to have a

translator from England who translates from Chinese into English, but as you can see, we had to go a long way to find a translator. Also we used to have quite a few people from European publishers in other countries: Italy, Spain, Germany. Now we have one French publisher here and I'm very happy with that. I know everything is changing, but you can see that it's really involved looking for new people, new initiatives, new cooperation.

Just to give a few examples of some of the people who are here, the participants I'm talking about, but also some of the speakers, we have a few who are more on the borderline of academic publishing, which is of course in a way an interesting example when it comes to publishing quality non-fiction. We have a publisher in a specific area, architecture, who is working with websites to promote that field. We have somebody who is working for a foundation which brings publishers and readers together, and who is very interested in digital ways to do that better. There is somebody bringing publishers and libraries together, and wanting to do that in a digital way. There's a bookseller, and he's also a literary critic and has websites that are doing that work. Then we have a few people connected to the university, who are consulting with publishers on digital developments, and we even have somebody, a designer, who comes from very far away, from outside of publishing and is getting closer to making digital books. And of course I should say that there is someone from China, which shows that digital opens up our world, and somebody working with the Arab world, who is at the moment more concerned with developments in Egypt, but he will also talk to us, maybe even about that.

So the theme is quality non-fiction, but as you will see once the programme starts, this conference will touch upon many new areas, and this is also important for us as a foundation, because as I said, traditionally we work with publishers, authors and translators, and after the merger we will probably have a much bigger role. We have even got a larger budget for it, not only for the writing and translating of non-fiction but also for new digital developments. So there are quite a few colleagues present here who are working in these fields and I think for us especially this conference will be very interesting, because we will have to find new definitions of our work. Until now we were working with trusted tools of judging quality, ways to more-or-less monitor that, but now we will have to find new ways of doing it. We will also have to pay even more attention than before to the diversity of the whole publishing world.

Before I hand over to the moderator, I have a few practical points. I would like to introduce the organization of this conference. First I want to name one important member of the organizing team who is unfortunately unable to be here, John Müller, who I hope will be following us virtually over the next two days. Victor Schiferli you've already met through LinkedIn, he is doing the digital reporting of this conference, together with Eric who is doing the filming, only of the speeches, for Facebook. Then at the back we have Liz Waters who is doing the paper, manual report. We have of course Jaja and Margje who together with me did all the practical organization, so if you have any questions during this conference, address us. To make it easier for you, since this is a building consisting of different houses and we will have to go to another part for lunch, we have put up these happy-looking signs with the conference logo that you can follow. In the room next to here, where we will have our break for coffee and tea, we also have a book table with some paper books, to show you some of the things we've supported, as well as brochures and even a map of Amsterdam in case you have any questions about that. And finally this is a non-smoking building so if you want to smoke it has to be outside.

So now I would like to hand over to Maarten Asscher, who has the challenging task of bringing all the different participants, opinions and discussions together in the coming one and a half days. He is the only one in Holland to combine so many different fields of publishing, as a former publisher, a translator, author and bookseller, and he even worked for the ministry of culture for a time. So please, Maarten.

**Maarten Asscher** - Thank you very much Maarten and I'll try to live up to the expectations you have just formulated. I'm very happy to welcome you from my side as the moderator of this conference, especially of course those who have come from far away, but also I'm very happy to see many professionals in the Dutch book trade and the Dutch literary world and the Dutch non-fiction community here. In previous conferences it was necessary to introduce all the speakers and to mention all the titles the authors had published and all the jobs that the professionals in publishing had held. This time there is already a whole conference behind us through LinkedIn, with all the CVs, and through Wikipedia and other commodities all the book titles of writers have already been discovered by you, so I'll keep the introductions as brief as possible. And besides, it's very clear from some of the CVs that have been circulated that it's not so easy as before to properly define the roles that people have. Even five or ten years ago you were able to say 'he's an editor', or 'he worked for years as an agent'. And then

you immediately knew more-or-less what kind of person would speak. Nowadays I think there is a sort of merged figure in our midst who might be called an enhanced book professional. Many people are not so easily identifiable or introducible any more. So I won't try to do the impossible.

Another thing that is not possible any more is to have a straight, linear programme in a conference like this. It has been tried on paper, with the morning session today referred to as 'Where are we now?', the afternoon session entitled 'What's next?' and then tomorrow we will digitally cross all the borders of the world. That sounds very sensible and logical, but to manage expectations a little bit from my side, this is of course purely fiction, which has no place in a non-fiction conference. So we are in the midst of a cloud of subjects, I would say, and a cloud of speakers and interests and challenges and innovations, and I will not try to make this into a linear conference, but I will try to help lead us on towards certain visions or expectations or ideas about the immediate future that we may be able to share with each other. I said immediate future. This is already a problematic notion. In some of the excerpts, the synopses, the texts, one comes across the phrase 'the foreseeable future'. That's also interesting. I would like to go into that later, because what the heck nowadays is the foreseeable future? As your moderator I can see two very clear points on the horizon. The first is our coffee break and the second is our lunch break. And I promise you that I will guard those with my life.

So, the programme starts with three speakers in this first morning session, from ten to eleven, who will all have approximately ten minutes and whose presentations will be followed by a brief discussion of ten minutes to raise factual questions, to allow for elucidations, to identify points of further discussion, and then after the coffee break we can have a full discussion about these subjects. So ten minutes each, ten minutes' discussion, then the coffee break and then in the next hour we will have our plenary discussion about the points raised.

First of all I would like to give the microphone over to Sara Lloyd, who is, as you have all been able to read for yourselves, digital director at Pan Macmillan. And before we stick our heads in the cloud, she will put our feet on the ground. Sara, please.

**Sara Lloyd** - Thank you. I hope I'll be able to do that. I was under the impression I was speaking for twenty minutes so I'm going to be speaking very fast to get through everything I want to say. I'm going to try and start with a little bit of an overview of what we actually

mean by digital today, and tell you some facts and figures about the markets, some really factual, grounding stuff about where we really are. That's going to include the current status of the e-book and device markets, some channel analysis, and a little bit of consumer data, but I'm just going to be lightly touching on all of this, obviously. And then I want to headline what I think are three fundamental issues, challenges and opportunities for us as publishers, as content creators, that come out of this emerging landscape for us. So first of all, just starting with 'what do we mean by digital?' Going back to basics. Three areas really: digital publishing, which splits down into e-books and things that go beyond books, and digital marketing.

So to start with digital publishing, and first of all with e-books. Today in the UK and the US we now have a genuine, measurable, commercial market for what I would call standard facsimile editions of our printed books in digital form. It's basically good news, it's relatively straightforward to address once you've spent a little bit of time working it out, it comes with a few known complications which I'll go into later. Just to give you some facts about this market, last year in the USA seventy-seven million units were sold of e-books, that's about nine percent of overall trade book unit sales – I'm talking about only trade books here, excluding academic and educational books. That generated about 759 million dollars of revenue, which equated to about six percent of trade revenues in the US. By 2014 this is expected to grow to thirty-six percent of overall revenues, and if you saw the Forrester survey that just came out during Digital Book World this week, half of US publishing executives believe that e-books will be the dominant format by 2014, which actually goes some way further than that report I'm just quoting there, which is a Futuresource report. So that's for the USA, which is obviously really leading the market. In the UK we sold – this isn't Pan Macmillan, this is overall – 3.7 million units, that's e-books sold in 2010, which equated to about 1.5% of overall trade book unit sales, which would be reflected by our own percentages. That was about 31 million pounds' worth of revenue or two percent of overall trade revenues, and by 2014 this is expected to grow to about thirteen or fourteen percent of revenues. In Europe it's a very different story, the journey is only just beginning. Obviously it's lagging behind the UK overall, but Germany is I'd say the next biggest market, with Scandinavia, France, Spain and Italy all gearing up very quickly. And as the big digital players move into markets, that's often what tends to then set them off.

So that's digital publishing. We know what's happening, it's a fairly straightforward thing, it's digitization of your content and then getting it into the channels. We know how the channels are shaping up. In the UK the traditional channels, the bricks-and-mortar retailers, the High Street retailers are suffering against the likes of Amazon and Apple. The independents are really nowhere. They have a massive hill to climb. They might find salvation in Google e-books, and that's yet to be seen in the UK, it's starting to be seen in the US already. The supermarkets are very interested in e-books too, but they don't really know how to deal with them and they're not fully in the game yet. They all will be, I guess, by the end of this year. The massive majority of e-book sales are going to dedicated e-book reading devices, which is kind of against the concept that it's all going to be around the multi-functional devices. So at the moment the tablet sales of e-books are a very small proportion. About 7% of e-book sales go to tablets and the rest really goes to dedicated devices. So the tablet sales of e-books are 7% of 1.5% of the market, so it's tiny, tiny, tiny, but mobile, which everyone always raves about, is completely invisible in terms of e-book sales. It's less than 1% of the UK e-book market, so it's 1% of 1.5% that's selling to mobile. So mobile's tiny.

This is all going to change significantly, I would say by 2014. We have an expectation that tablet sales will account for more like fifty percent of the e-book market by then. So there will still be quite a strong dedicated device market, but tablets will really be starting to come into their own. I'm sure that will be seen as tablet prices come down and it becomes more widespread. But we don't really expect mobile to make a big dent in e-book sales and we think it will stay a minority segment. It will be key for lots of other reasons, marketing being the most important one.

What else do we know about this market? Well, pricing hasn't settled yet. It's very inconsistent and the varying rates of VAT have a lot to do with that. It's all part of it being a nascent market; pricing often takes a while to settle down. I think it will settle down. To let you know a little bit about categories and what's selling, mass-market fiction is absolutely by far the biggest category. General non-fiction is very close behind that and picking up a lot now, particularly since the iPad was launched and the tablets have come into the market and you've got a lot more of the kind of demographic that buys some of the serious non-fiction coming up. And also study, business-related non-fiction. Our Alan Sugar biography did very well in e-form. Study and business-style non-fiction comes closely after the general non-fiction and then how-to and general reference after that. The children's category is really,

really small, which you'd expect. I think the devices are not particularly child-friendly, particularly the black-and-white e-reading devices. The tablets are child-friendly, but are expensive, so I think that's all going to change again this year. Also, the formats haven't been ready to deal with integrated pictures and text, but they will become so, and very quickly.

That's all just what we call straightforward e-books, vanilla e-books, I call them, so they're just the digital versions of what you already have. The second area, which is in a way more interesting but less measurable, is the non-facsimile editions, or the digital products that go beyond the book. This ranges from the e-books plus extras, that's e-books with a few multimedia elements built in or some extra stuff that you don't find in the book, right through to the fully interactive story- or narrative-led but digital experiences. I think when you go into fully interactive games then it's not a book any more, it's actually a game, so you have to distinguish between these various areas, but we have a lot less supporting data on how this market is developing, partly because it's very difficult to measure it, since there isn't really a single set of channels where it's happening and it's less of a known quantity. Still, in 2010 experimentation in this area amongst publishers increased a good deal, particularly for publishers who have research and development budgets. For the smaller publishers maybe it was tougher to do that, because they're very expensive to make sometimes. But we can say for sure that income from these enhanced editions, as you might call them, was a fraction of a fraction of overall e-book sales, partly because there are very few of them being made. The tablet devices are ready for these kinds of products but other devices aren't. Mobile is ready for it but people are generally not actually reading or experiencing these things on mobile as much as we might have thought they would. The formats aren't developed, so the straightforward e-book formats can only really support quite clunky inclusion of little pieces of multimedia, for example. The development costs to put them across all the different proprietary platforms are very high and can be an inhibitor, and the consumer appetite isn't really clear. I think unless you have a big brand or you have something that you're adding that's really of value, it's difficult to measure that. So the commercial model is quite wobbly, the cost against the return on investment isn't clear, it's hard to predict, and that's related to the consumer appetite. How much is a consumer prepared to pay for something extra?

As with any publishing decision this isn't actually difficult, it's just publishing. You look at the market and what they will perceive to be of value, and that's how you make publishing

decisions. But technology or enhancement for enhancement's sake is tending to lose people a lot of money. So yes, the consumer might pay a euro extra for an enhanced e-book for a really mass market, maybe a TV cult personality's biography which has some never-before-seen video included, but really it's difficult to get people to pay more, it's actually more about getting placement. So if you're creating something enhanced, particularly for those channels where it's going to show off their device to the best quality, then that helps you to get placement. It might help you to get a home page or banners, all that sort of thing. I think in 2011 we're going to see a lot more experimentation, particularly around the bigger brands and particularly suitable categories, and I'd say obviously there are various categories in non-fiction that are very suitable for this. I think there's going to be a lot more action in the children's area this year too and in educational publishing, where interactivity genuinely lends value in a way that it might not for example in a fiction brand.

Just to quickly touch on what we mean by digital marketing, I think it covers a multitude of areas but I think it's really emerging as a very important component of publishers' strategies, and publishers are kind of behind on this. There are four Cs that I would talk about here. Community, so reaching out to existing communities, online and offline, and in the best way where there's the interface between online and offline, I think; developing new communities; involving aspects of community in the writing and reading process. The second category is content, which now doesn't just mean that you are publishing content but every piece of content you create, from your marketing video through to the audio version of the text through to the text itself plus other associated multimedia assets that you might create. All of these now become part of your armoury in a digital marketing solution. Context as well, which is where mobile obviously really comes in. The time and place and experience being had at the time a reader or a potential reader connects with you, or the book, or the marketing piece, or the author. And the fourth category is connection, between readers, that you might facilitate but you might not be part of, or that you might not facilitate at all and which might be happening somewhere else, between readers and authors, or between publishers, readers and authors. Content becomes social currency in this series of connections. So it's how the interplay develops between our core content assets, which are all those different pieces of content I've talked about. The aspects of online community, context and connection, that can so easily be plugged in by us or by our readers, are going to be the most interesting thing that happens over the next few years.

This is going to affect absolutely everything, right from how we define and understand IP [intellectual property] and copyright, because once you create a piece of content and put it out there, now it can have notes added by the reader and they can share those notes with other people. What is the copyright in the new piece of material that gets shared? Copyright law has a lot to deal with there. It's going to completely redefine how we see our relationship with the consumer. I think as publishers we have had a very distant relationship with the consumer and we're starting to work out ways to have a much closer relationship with the consumer, and that's going to be absolutely key. Because if you think about those four Cs, it's all about relationships and the meeting points between publisher, author and reader.

So that's a quick summary of what I'm talking about. The three key themes. I'm speaking very fast, I apologize, I'm trying to be quick. So the themes. I think number one is the transformation of channels, number two is the evolution of marketing, and number three is the impact of globalization which is caused by the internet. So I'm just going to address some of the headline thoughts on this and the rest of the speakers over the next two days will be drawing out some of these themes, so I'm very much just trying to give you an overview.

So talking about the transformation of channels: how are we going to embrace a completely brand new supply chain? The growth in online bookselling overall and particularly this spectacular growth in e-book sales, which is, albeit it from a zero base, just going up a cliff in the UK and the US. And it's going to happen here as well. So those two things combined are, I'm afraid to say, going to spell the demise of many bricks-and-mortar channels, and the new most dominant channels really spell a sea change in the shape and philosophy of our key routes to market. Of course we're talking about Google, we're talking about Apple, we're talking about Amazon, we're talking about a few other players as well, but they're the three key ones and I think it's useful to think about some of the key features that define these people. So they're first of all online-only businesses – very different from what we're used to. They're absolutely 150% consumer-focused. They know so much about consumers because they have that direct interface with them and they have analytics, and they're technology companies so they just gather and eat and spew out data about the consumer, and they use that. They're very young companies. Google and Amazon I think are both less than fifteen years old. I'm not sure if I've got that completely right, but they're very young companies. Apple is a bit older but it's young in its current formation. They operate at scale, so they don't really think about niche, or niches. What helps them to do what they do is their immense scale

and their global size, so they are about dominating the web. What they do is they use data and analytics in order to segment customers within that enormous scale. They're global as I've said. They're platform builders. Their devices are absolutely secondary to Amazon and Google. Really it's actually about building the platform. Less so Apple; they are about devices, but it's the interplay between the two that makes their devices successful. They move quite unpredictably and they move at pace, so they have the capacity for long-term vision that again publishers sometimes don't have. We talk about the next two to three years, maybe, at the most, and in digital the foreseeable future I'd say is probably less than six months.

What does this mean for us? If our bricks-and-mortar channels to market are severely dented over the next let's say five years, what will happen to us and how will we handle that? Well one of the things we'll all have to get used to is that hand-selling of the physical book by a passionate enthusiast in a place will reduce, and it will reduce quite substantially, potentially, over time, unless these kinds of booksellers find new ways to meet with their consumers. So that expert, on-the-spot recommendation will reduce. And what's going to replace it? Well at the moment what's replacing it is algorithmically produced recommendations or social recommendations. There are some really simple straightforward things this means for us. To get down to some practical stuff, our metadata that goes with our books has to be absolutely complete, it has to be accurate and it has to be a lot richer. So at the moment we think we should send out the price and the ISBN and a couple of other bits of interesting information, but it needs to have blurbs, it needs to have reviews, it needs to have recommendation links, it needs to really speak about the book, almost like an enthusiast would speak about the book, except that it needs to be in the data. So that's going to be quite different for us all I think.

Search engine optimization has got to be part of our holistic strategy as businesses, but it's also got to be part of our book-by-book campaign strategy. Actually Peter was just saying to me earlier while we were having coffee that at Digital Book World three people put their hands up in that whole conference when they were asked whether they had a search strategy. So we can see we're pretty far off on that. Covers. Book covers. What will a cover be? A cover won't be a cover, a cover will be a logo, or an image, or an icon, and already at Pan Macmillan, for example, we look at all our covers as images this size, in order to judge how we're going to make them work in a digital channel. So we have to imagine that people might be looking at them on here [a smart phone], and it's a small app-sized icon. Viral digital marketing assets and online pre-awareness are going to be vital, and social media strategy will

become vital as well. I know that other people are going to talk about these things in detail, so I'm just giving you a shopping list at the moment.

So we need to think and move a lot more quickly to bring our ways of working into alignment with these big new global, powerful and now key customers of ours. Really we kind of have to start behaving a little bit like them, and we need to get closer to consumers ourselves in order to maintain the value that we offer to authors. If we're going to offer authors a service effectively, we need to be able to do all of this stuff for them; we need to be able to do it very professionally and efficiently.

That's about the transformation of channels. My second theme is: how will book marketing evolve? Well, this is a kind of *duh* moment, but it will move increasingly online. Where marketing does remain in more traditional media, so from broadcast to outside to print media and so on, digital features are going to become included in all of these areas. Digital elements such as QR codes or digital tagging, calls to action online, call-outs for digital channels will all become part of the campaign. And they are becoming part of the campaign where I work. How will book marketing evolve? It will be affected by the decrease in physical books just being out there, on the street and in shop windows, in people's hands on the tube or the train. If they're holding a device, there's no book jacket, so there's no looking interestedly across the compartment in the train and thinking: oh I think I fancy reading that. How's that going to be replaced? What will replace that serendipity of just walking past a shop window and seeing something in the window, the serendipity of browsing in a shop? The browsing experience online is definitely not as good as the physical browsing experience and that's a huge issue, I think. Whoever solves that one, come and see me straight away.

Mobile. Not important for e-book sales; very important for marketing. It becomes particularly key because if you think about the way the rest of the world operates and the way the rest of the world sells stuff, the rest of the world outside of publishing already sells stuff in a very localized, customized way around your mobile experience, and I think that book publishers have got a lot of work to do there. In trade publishing in particular, publishers tend to think book by book, campaign by campaign, short term, short term, short term. I think we're going to see a trend moving away from book-by-book campaigns to much more, much broader, much deeper ongoing strategies, including online community building and brand building, so that you're not just living or dying by the next book. We're going to need to have businesses

that can have a longer term vision than that, and in general there's going to be a greater focus on developing and communicating brands, because in the cross-media landscape that's what works.

The next theme for me, as I said, was the impact of globalization caused by the net. So what is the impact and how do we deal with it? Well in a way... I don't want to sound like I'm trying to be frightening, but it's a potential crisis: for localized pricing, for publication timings. At the moment we sell rights all around the world and different people publish the book at different times and at different prices, and there is genuinely right now a potential crisis there. There is already a crisis there. The issue is: how do we continue to support localized specialist publishing businesses, who can publish for that market as well as buying the foreign imports? If it's not managed effectively, particularly by the global publishers, this is going to cause huge issues. So it goes back to data again, which is very boring, but managing our territorial data is absolutely critical. Ensuring actually that we, as groups, are supporting our local publishing entities and that they handle promotions and sales back through for the books in their areas; thinking more and more about things like global release dates – all of these things are going to be key. Global marketing campaigns are going to be key.

Another issue to do with globalization, or a sort of tangent to globalization, is the impact of piracy, which will start to bite a lot harder as the markets globalize, and we believe very much where I work that a kind of stick-and-carrot approach is required for this. So there's going to need to be coordination between publishers around the globe, where we actually effectively co-own... At least, we don't co-own, someone has the head contract or whatever, but basically we co-own sets of rights around the globe. If that book is being pirated somewhere, who's going to deal with it? Does it really matter whose edition it is? At Pan Macmillan we have an anti-piracy officer and in the digital departments what we think about a lot is: how do we work with the channels and how do we get as much legitimate digital product out there at fair prices that will hopefully allay the casual piracy element? You're never going to get rid of the serious piracy.

So those are my three themes. I'm sorry it's such a quick overview. I hope that's given you a few opening positioning statements and some practical thoughts about what we have to do. I think the themes I've touched on will be expanded as we go through the day, and tomorrow,

and I look forward to talking to you all a lot more as well between the sessions. If you have any questions then feel free to come and see me. Thank you.

**Maarten Asscher** - Thank you very much Sara, that was indeed a wonderfully compact overview and also in a way an agenda containing many subjects that we'll be able to talk about today and tomorrow. I would like to give a brief opportunity for any factual questions. I have made a short list of subjects that we will certainly be able to discuss later, but if there are any factual questions from all of you there, I would like to... Yes, please.

**Nicky Harman** - I'm a translator. My question is a very simple, practical question. You said that the pricing of e-books is inconsistent. Could you give us an idea of the range, very approximately. You know, one to a hundred pounds?

**Sara Lloyd** - I think generally, it's obviously settling down at lower than print price. So it's anywhere between one pound and the highest price of a hardback. But it does differentiate between the channels and it differentiates between publishers. The different VAT rates as I say, depending on where the retailer is, also creates a problem. I saw a survey a couple of months ago with a page of prices, and for the same kind of book the prices ranged quite significantly. So I think it's confusing for the consumer. I don't think it's a massive issue, because it's such a small market right now and by the time the market's bigger it will settle down. Because the market finds its rate.

**Peter Collingridge** - Can I jump in there? I'm from Enhanced Editions. I was just going to give the example of Steven Fry.

**Sara Lloyd** - Yes, that's a good example.

**Peter Collingridge** - So Penguin published a Steven Fry autobiography in, when was it, in August last year, and they produced the hardback book and a straight e-book for Kindle, an enhanced e-book app for the iPad and an app for the iPhone. And there's an audio book as well. And there was complete disparity on the pricing of all these separate editions, even though broadly they have the same content. So it was something like: the hardback I think was £17.99 but was reduced to £9.99 on Amazon. The Kindle edition – this was after agency – was £15.99, as it was on the iPad edition. The app was £9.99. So the consumer was faced

with all of these different products without understanding any notion of the added value, or lost value, between each of these formats.

**Maarten Asscher** - But aren't consumers, especially in the UK but also in the Dutch market, totally at ease with such price differences?

**Peter Collingridge** - Well not if you read the reviews on iTunes. People would go there and say: what's this? Because in the App Store...

**Martien de Vletter** - Can I ask, are the prices in the different national sales the same?

**Peter Collingridge** - Well no, because Penguin only had the UK rights.

**Martien de Vletter** - So in each area it's different.

**Peter Collingridge** - Yes, so the margins that the publishers get in those sales are vastly different, although they're all digital products, so apart from hardbacks they're all incurring VAT losses on them. But no, what you see is that different contexts have different expectations from users, so in the App Store most people are used to paying nothing to next to nothing. I think the average price in the App Store is something like \$1.99, so as soon as publishers charge significantly more than that it immediately incurs resistance from users. So it may be settling down amongst the kind of facsimile or verbatim editions, but in the digital marketplace where there are a lot of competing products of the same title, it's a complete and utter mess.

**Maarten Asscher** - Thank you.

**Martien de Vletter** - But that also came up in the car industry. There was a time when cars sales started on the internet and there were different prices, but now this has settled down and the market is completely transparent, so for a BMW five years old with so many kilometres on the clock you will always pay the right price, because it's so transparent.

**Sara Lloyd** - What happens is partly that because the channels are all one click away from each other, the need for pricing to become consistent is huge. Your competitor is literally one click away, one search result away, so you get a different kind of attitude to pricing because of that.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay, I've added the subject of pricing in the digital market as a subject for further discussion. There is evidently more to say about this. For the moment I would like to conclude our agenda-setting on the basis of your presentation, for which renewed thanks, and continue with our second presentation in the pre-coffee era and give the microphone over to Harry Blom, who is head of the physics and astronomy editorial department at Springer in the US.

**Harry Blom** - Nice to be speaking here and thanks for inviting me. Only ten minutes, but the good thing is that I think Sara touched upon a lot of things already, so if you hear me saying sometimes rather the same things, then maybe that will make it a little easier to remember. And I will also be speaking fast, by the way.

Where are we now? Maybe we should also ask: where did we come from? I think it's only about ten years ago that the first digital editions of books appeared, basically riding the wave of electronic publishing in journals. But those e-books were very much the facsimile versions of the print versions, very two-dimensional, so to speak. *The* publication was still the printed edition. There was also very much the idea that reading from a computer screen was not going to work. At most, electronic files are nice to search through and if you want multimedia then you glue this clunky CD-ROM into the back of the book and that's surely your e-books with extras. With the arrival of smart phones and the black-and-white Kindle in November 2007, this was already changing a lot. There was a much wider availability of e-books. I think a lot of publishers started to realize: wait a minute, if I bring out a print edition I should also have an e-book. The business model is starting to work, selling e-books. There are some experiments there, but still the format was very two-dimensional, and I think it's only within the last few years, maybe the last year, that there's been a lot more change. With the apps and with the rise of social media, books are becoming more three-dimensional. My colleagues now talk about app-etized books, really creating apps, and they move away from the idea that it's a book. There's a lot of embedded functionality, linking to reference works. That's what we do within Springer especially, with academic reference works, encyclopaedias, handbooks, dictionaries, linking also to these entries. So you embed the book into a database. As Sara said, you can now annotate a text, you can share that with other readers, even with authors, so it becomes a community thing.

So a book becomes a living archive and it changes really rapidly, or it can change really rapidly. You can have it corrected really fast; it becomes a really dynamic sort of product. That changes everything. And readers also start to zoom in, at the chapter level or even the paragraph level, satisfying their specific information needs, and maybe forgetting about the bigger picture, which was the book. So they get what they need. In a way, then, the print edition becomes secondary, but without I think losing its good old value. It becomes a separate derivative of the e-book.

Now the electronic files are vulnerable, of course, to copying. So piracy is an issue as already mentioned. I think instead of putting a lot of effort into fighting it, it's much better to put your efforts into making sure that piracy doesn't affect you. I think the hackers will always be able to get rid of the lock and there's an audience out there that simply doesn't want to pay for the book, so they will find ways to copy it, like in the old days perhaps students copying the hardcover. I think there are at least three solutions to piracy, moving away a little bit from the problem. One thing is the user experience on, say, pay sites. If it's easy to buy the books, if they're not too expensive, as for instance with the music industry and the movies industry where they developed the iTunes and the Netflix websites. These are really convenient websites to go to. Fairly complete catalogues – I think completeness is a factor. Easy to pay a little bit of money. So the user experience becomes so comfortable that you can actually make your money and people don't think about going to file-share sites to get things for free, because they're happy with the paid-for experience.

I think it's also important to make it likely that a pirated copy loses value, and as I said, if books now become more embedded into a database, then you have to copy the entire database to get all the nice linking features that are in there. Also you may miss out on the updates, so lifting the book from its ecosystem, so to speak, will lose you a lot of value. And then of course I think the publishers should make sure that they earn enough from the legitimate customers. The model that we are using now within Springer is that we sell e-book packages to institutional customers, and these are subject-specific, so we make selections. For instance we promise a physics library that we will provide them with a package of high-quality titles, say 250 each year, and if they then promise to buy the 250 titles each year then they get a discount. So you introduce a subscription model again for selling e-books. In that way you have a lot of certified revenue coming your way, and then you don't have to worry about piracy, about students maybe posting the PDF files online. Indeed we don't have any lock on

these PDF files and that's actually what the customers really like. So you turn it a little bit into an advantage that your files are unprotected.

What's the future of marketing? I think Sara already mentioned some things. There's this information avalanche coming our way. Google announced late last year that they've scanned about fifteen million titles now and they also said that's about ten percent of what they're planning to do. Of course not all of that material will be available for free because of copyright issues, but it's clear that the information overflow is still developing. So how can you possibly market and sell your one nice title that you're adding to this pool? Indeed we see that if you do a marketing campaign, you have a nice initial peak on the impulse buy, but that very quickly dies away and after that you really need to make sure that your target audience knows how to find that title. So you therefore need to do other things to make sure that the uniqueness of the book is recognized by the specific audience that's waiting for this title. And how to do that? Well, as mentioned, search engine optimization is something that's really important; clever tagging of your content with the proper catchphrases; social media optimization, frequent and targeted use of Twitter, blogs, Facebook etc. But this is a very manual thing to do. Fortunately many authors also like to work on this, they like to see the attention that their book is triggering, so they definitely help the publishers to make sure that the news about the book is spread throughout the internet towards the right audiences, although authors don't always know exactly who the target audience is, or who their audience is. That's where the publishers come in again.

It's better to generate efficient automated algorithms; it's more cost-efficient to do this properly. Of course companies like Amazon have shown the way. They are tracking the search and the sales behaviour, so they're quite good now at telling people: if you like this book you should also buy this book. But I think this is just a start. I think we can throw in some more parameters to make that even more accurate. We can throw in the education levels and geographical factors and preferences, and maybe veto out some topics. So you need to start a dialogue with your reader, who will then tell you what it is actually that they're looking for. Then you can optimize your algorithm. Also I think semantic search optimization will become important. In a sense 'calculating' what the book is really about and using that for indexing.

And then branding was mentioned. I think indeed to make sense of it all, people are looking for reliability. So if you as a publisher can make sure that your books have high quality and

that they touch certain areas, then I think people will come to your website again. We lost a lot of eyeballs to Amazon and Google but I think we shouldn't give up trying to get that attention back to the website, because people have a certain expectation of what you are publishing and you should make sure that you satisfy that expectation. So I'd like to leave it at that and take some questions if there's still time.

**Maarten Asscher** - Thank you very much Harry. Any questions? Yes, please.

**James Boekbinder** - I have one question. I haven't heard any success stories of publishers doing what you just said, becoming a kind of publishing Amazon in their own right, so to speak. Except for one, and that was Barnes and Noble. I don't know much about that example. Do you guys know more about it? Apparently they're the only ones that managed to dent Amazon and put Amazon actually on the run with their strategy. And with their own device, with their strategy for getting people into the bookstores, their website is doing well. Do you know anything more about that example or other examples perhaps of success stories?

**Harry Blom** - I must admit I'm not convinced that it's a success story yet. Maybe they've been successful in selling that idea. Frankly I think they are still struggling and their owners are looking to maybe sell the company. When I look at my own company, Springer, I think the success story is trying to team up with success. So we make deals with Amazon. Like: okay if you guys are so successful in reaching our audience, then by all means sell our books to this audience and we'll share. We're even so far that they are now printing some of our books, because their fulfilment is superior, their customer service is superior, so what you can do is team up with them. But at the same time you also make deals with the competition, with Apple and with Google, and I think that recently happened with lots of publishers. They're very happy that there is now competition from Google and Apple, and they're teaming up with them as well. I think that will affect the price that will be set for e-books in the future, because Amazon did push those prices down, because they were more interested in selling the Kindle than necessarily selling the content on it, so sometimes even going lower than what they would have to pay the publisher for it.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay, thank you. Right there.

**Angus Phillips** - I'm from Oxford Brookes University. You just made brief mention of semantic search optimization and I know Google's very interested in that area but as a

publisher, what kind of things are you doing in that area? If you could tell us, briefly, I'd be very interested.

**Harry Blom** - Well to be very honest with you we are looking at what the techie people are doing and which algorithm they are developing and then maybe we buy that, but at the moment we know it's important but the only thing we do is, for instance, the astrophysics data-system they are working on at Harvard, they are programming these algorithms and we give them our full text. So it's not that they can show our full text but they can use our full text and then show the search results to people who come to the website.

**Angus Phillips** - Right. So it's something you would buy in rather than do yourself as a publisher.

**Harry Blom** - Yes. Sometimes we feel we have to become an IT company because things are moving so fast, but if that's not really your core competence then it's probably better to wait and see – and buy.

**Angus Phillips** - Yes.

**Maarten Asscher** - Thanks. One last intervention. Yes.

**Peter Collingridge** - We're doing some work at the moment on semantic stuff. I've worked in some way with it for thirteen years, particularly around marketing, and what we're looking at is how we can look at the title of a book and also, having indexed the text, doing what's called concept extraction. You take out terms that appear particularly regularly or are unique to that text and then you use search algorithms to query. Let's say it's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. You might just query a load of websites that make their data available for *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Very obvious ones would be YouTube videos, Wikipedia, *The Guardian* reviews, the BBC website, maps of locations in there. We're creating a prototype that pulls all that data back into the application itself, so that you can support the reading experience, and that includes conversations and all sorts of other stuff. You're actually trying to... Well, the user case for us was when you watch a film you then go and google it and you end up at the IMDb [Internet Movie Database]. There's no such corollary in the book industry. So we're thinking: well, maybe the piece of software that you read in can do this. The benefit of that is that you can then make smart inferences about what that person might want to read

next and make recommendations to them. A very obvious one is: if you like that then you'll like *The Girl Who Played with Fire*. But you might look for somebody who likes Scandinavian literature, for example. So it's early stages but we're quite excited by those opportunities at the moment.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay, thank you very much Peter. We will talk about Harry's other agenda-setting subjects later on. Thank you so far and I would now like to switch to the third and last speaker of this part of our programme, Jos de Mul, professor of philosophy at Erasmus University in Rotterdam and an author translated into not only English but also Turkish and Chinese, I understand, which gives you a very good position in this international setting. Please, go ahead.

**Jos de Mul** - Good morning. Again there will be some overlap with the previous speakers. What is different is that I will not speak that fast. And I will speak from a somewhat different perspective, from a philosophical perspective, so Maarten said we'd start off from the ground, now we are moving into the clouds. *Ins Blaue hinein*, as you can say in German. One of my main research interests in the last two decades has been the impact of technologies on human cognition and human imagination. My focus was not in the first place on what we might call beta technologies, such as hammers, steam engines, aeroplanes etcetera but more on alpha technologies, technologies that have to do with symbols and with writing. And they are a very interesting subject because they have a profound impact on our cognitive structure. They are, to use a metaphor, more-or-less the operating system of the human mind.

In my very concise talk I will tell you something about two major transformations of our cognitive structure. The first one was in the new stone age, about 30,000-10,000 years ago: the invention of writing. We can understand this as a kind of outsourcing of human memory, more specifically of the products of human thinking and human imagination. The second transformation is taking place at this very moment in what we might call the newest stone age, because it's based on silicon in many respects, and this second transformation could be understood as an outsourcing of human thinking and imagination itself, that is, a delegation not of our cognitive product but of these processes themselves. I will focus on some similarities and differences between those two transformations, and I will then try to give some suggestions as to what this might mean for the production, distribution and consumption of non-fiction in the digital era. And all this in ten minutes. I think you're as curious as I am

as to whether I will manage that. Well, if we look at the invention of writing, taking place somewhere between 35,000 years and 10,000 years ago, two developments were connected at that time. On the one hand we saw a transformation from a culture of hunter-gatherers, with very small groups living quite simple lives, into cultivators, farmers. And this also meant that people started to live in cities, that social relationships became much more complex, a lot of new technologies were invented, and there was a Neolithic information overload, because societies became too complex to remember everything. So the fact that the invention of writing takes place in this time was a result of necessity.

We often think about the invention of writing as one of the major leaps in human culture, in human history, but there was a lot of scepticism about this and a very interesting person in this respect is the philosopher Plato, who was not very fond of the new invention and he even devoted some of his dialogues to this specific topic. In *The Phaedrus* for example he takes King Thamus, one of the speakers in the dialogue, and has him say the following: ‘Writing will create forgetfulness in the learners’ souls, because they will not use their memories, they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves. You give your disciples not truth but only the semblance of truth. They will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing. They will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing. They will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality.’ Plato takes a stance that we often find in discussions on the delegation of cognitive tasks to computers. In those discussions too it is argued that the delegation, in this case not of the products of thinking but of the processes themselves, to a separate machine undermines human autonomy and wisdom. However, in both cases not only is the fact that these technical means form an integral part of our cognitive structure ignored, but also the fact that in this structure new, typical human capabilities such as writing and deep reading are created. It is not without irony that both the style and the content of Plato’s philosophy is to a large extent a product of the technology of writing. There’s a very different kind of philosophizing in an age of writing than in oral cultures. The delegation of memory to writing relieved human thinking of the task of remembering and opened up opportunities for the development of new modes of thinking. We might expect similar events to occur in the case of outsourcing our writing and reading capabilities to computers and expert systems. This delegation does not entail an impoverishment of human literacy, but rather an extension of it, by challenging us again to develop new modes of imagination and reasoning.

What implications does this have for non-fiction in the digital era? Well, whereas the invention of writing required the development of new skills of literacy – reading and writing – the outsourcing of the processes of thinking to computers requires the development of new skills, skills of digital literacy. As we are still in the middle of the transition it's not easy to predict what these new skills will look like. However, when we look at four of the basic characteristics of the digital computer – multimediality, interactivity, connectivity and virtuality – we might at least predict in which domains we can expect the development of these new skills to take place.

In this last part of my short talk, I will mention these four characteristics and give some suggestions as to the implications of this. First, whereas the traditional writing culture, the traditional book, is a mono-medium, the computer has developed as a multi-medium, which thanks to the digital code combines words, images and sounds in all possible permutations. Given the present information overload, for non-fiction especially the visualization of large quantities of data is one of the biggest challenges. Harry was talking about information overload and I think this is really a big challenge for a kind of visualization of these large quantities of information. Imagine for example a three-dimensional browser which gives a visual representation of the 20,000 remarks made by Ludwig Wittgenstein. It's a very interesting theme, the 20,000 remarks he made in his *Nachlass*. How to get a grasp of that? Well, there are some very interesting experiments in Norway at the moment about trying to visualize this very complex network of thoughts, as Wittgenstein called it himself, which he was not able to combine into one linear book. We need different kinds of disclosure of this rich body of knowledge. You might also think about the human genome as a way of navigating into this body of knowledge, or a kind of browser for the internet to browse through these billions of pages, a browser that might be fully scalable with many combinational dimensions. Whereas the use of search engines as we know them is like looking for something in a completely dark room, the interfaces of the future will literally open our eyes I think, in this sense. This has to do with convenience, one of the themes about publishing in this area.

Second, whereas writing only offers the passive products of our human cognition, the digital computer is an interactive medium, which enables the user to organize the data and information himself. Just as the author of a hypertext novel guides his readers into a narrative space rather than a linear story, I think that many non-fiction books of the future will offer a

kind of argumentational space, a kind of simulation, rather than a single argument. It's a kind of multi-dimensional database, and the development of interfaces for this kind of database is I think very important. Because the user can add information to this database – and Amazon.com is a very interesting kind of experiment within the world of publishing in doing this – in such a system the interface will enable us to enter into a kind of living Platonic dialogue rather than reading a fixed monologue.

This brings me to the third aspect: connectivity. It's already been mentioned that user content is very important. Personally I'm quite sceptical about semantic networks, because it's so extremely complex to model natural language, it's far beyond our capabilities as yet. It's much easier to use the computers we already have: the readers. Because all their thoughts, all their associations, when you put them into the database it's very interesting, and Amazon.com is already working with this. It's very fuzzy, but it works a lot better than those strictly defined formal kinds of semantic networks. There's a lot of buzz still, there has been for twenty years about semantic networks, but we are not making a lot of progress, I think. But perhaps I'm too sceptical. So that's connectivity. It's a kind of poly-logue rather than a dialogue, because so many people are involved.

If I may add one small side remark, something that I was thinking about during the other two talks. When we look at the tasks of publishers, I think traditionally they have had two main tasks. One is selection, what to publish, and the second one is the production and distribution of the books. In non-fiction especially there is a big problem for publishers now. I'm working at a university and it's a daily thing. Nowadays universities, for example, can easily publish themselves, because on the world wide web you can easily have access to a very large community of readers, so we do not use the publishers as we did in the past, as scientists, as scholars. And the funny thing is that in the field of non-fiction, of scientific publications, the selection is already done by us as well, because we are the peer reviewers. Especially now that many journals are going online, university libraries have to pay twice, because they want to have the paper books, the hard copies, and they want to have the electronic version. So now there is a big movement within universities to say we'd do better to start publishing ourselves, because we already do the selection and we have the means of distribution too. If publishers want to survive in this specific part of the market, they have to focus on this interface value – not to select which publications, because universities can do that themselves, but to look at the interface in this big body of knowledge. I think there's a lot for publishers to gain here.

Very briefly, on the last topic, the virtuality of computers, I think computers are virtual machines in two different senses that are connected. The multi-central computer models that are now being made are virtual in the sense that they are convincing simulations of physical and cultural processes. They are not real in fact, but they are often real in effect. That's famous quote by Michael Heim. If you go into a flight simulator you cannot really fly but you can really become air sick. It's not real in fact but it's real in effect. And of course it's the whole idea of Second Life. You're not really in a second life but you can fall in love, you can become angry at others etcetera. So it's not real in fact but it's real in effect. That's one notion of virtual reality, as a kind of simulation of reality. In the second place, virtual also has the meaning of a kind of potential. A body of knowledge is a collection of elements that can be recombined in many different ways. So in one computer game, for example, there are many different virtual paths you can go down, different paths through the database, so to say.

What is interesting is that nowadays scientists are moving, in a way, from reality to possibility. When I talk to a young molecular biologist nowadays and we are talking about genes, we are talking in a certain sense about different things, because I'm old-fashioned in many ways. I grew up in a kind of historical world and if I think about evolution I'm thinking about the very long history that started four billion years ago and developed gradually. They are talking about the gene pool, about a database which you can recombine in many different respects. For example, one of the very popular fields at the moment is synthetic biology. You take bio-bricks, you can recombine them on your laptop and then you can print them out in a DNA synthesizer and create your own organisms. That's a very fascinating thing. They are moving in a certain sense from reality to possibility. That's something they share with fiction. Fiction is also imagination about possibilities. But the difference is that these sciences can make these possibilities real, because you can first design an organism and then you can print it out. This is in the very far future, I think, not within a decade or something like that, but I can also imagine that in the non-fiction book of the future, for example, you design your own flowers and then you print them out on your personal DNA printer and you have a very nice flower to put in your garden. This is not science fiction, this is science fact. Already, if you have a laptop, you can order bio-bricks from the internet and you can buy a secondhand DNA synthesizer in the US at the moment for about \$1,000 and then you can print your own virus. That's a very big challenge when it comes to bioterrorism etc. It's already possible. Of course we don't yet have the personal DNA printer, but only thirty years ago everybody was saying: nobody will have a personal computer because there are mainframes. Well DNA synthesizer

or mainframe, they will be there I think in the future. Whether this world of science fiction will also lead to satisfaction is of course a big question. I will not deal with that today.

**Maarten Asscher** - Thank you Jos de Mul for this most inspiring third presentation. As far as I'm concerned it was a case of satis-non-fiction. I suggest that with all this inspiration hanging in the air that we don't spoil that inspiration by asking factual questions now but first go into our coffee break and in slightly less than half an hour's time we'll pick up this cloud of inspiration for our plenary discussion. So see you in twenty-five minutes here. Thank you very much.

**Friday 12.30-2.00 pm**

**Discussion**

**Maarten Asscher** - Welcome back. My compliments on your discipline. I would like to try and discuss the main points of discussion from the three wonderful presentations we had before our coffee break, starting with a question to Sara. In looking at the digital market as you have done, and in light of the many rather specific audience-oriented marketing strategies that are necessary, is the larger scale of a publishing company still an advantage in this new digital marketplace?

**Sara Lloyd** - Good question. I think that scale is enormously helpful in some ways and a big disadvantage in other ways, and it's how you manage it. So it's useful in having leverage in deals, in making deals with the channels. It's useful in terms of having capacity and perhaps a budget to do new things and to innovate and to buy in talent, to use third parties for that. Actually we're not a very large player, we're the fifth biggest trade publisher in the UK and we're quite small by comparison to the fourth biggest, but the difficulties about size are in terms of how quickly you can move and how quickly you can make decisions. I think one of the issues with real scale, real size, is when companies become very bureaucratized, when there are umpteen levels of approval to get anything done, or when things tend to then get very siloed into different departments, because in digital I think it calls for extreme collaboration between all of the traditional sections of a publishing house. If you're in these little empires, then that's almost going to create a failure for you before you've even started. So if you are a big company it's about how you ensure that those two downsides don't happen, which is about how you organize yourselves and actually most importantly the culture you create, that the culture is a collaborative, virtual teambuilding kind of culture rather than 'this team owns this piece and that team owns that piece and we're all at war with each other'.

**Maarten Asscher** - Are you already experiencing that new digital strategies change the structure of the company?

**Sara Lloyd** - Yes, absolutely.

**Maarten Asscher** - In what way?

**Sara Lloyd** - The way that I've tried to run digital at Pan Macmillan has been very much about creating a centre of excellence that's looking to what the next big thing is going to be, and doing feasibility studies and working out what the resourcing will be and working out what the formats will be and what the processes will be and the systems will be, to deal with the next big thing, whilst absolutely embedding what has become the norm, so now e-books, into the rest of the business. It has affected the structure, because in our business we have people across every single division, all with digital objectives, with digital elements to their role, and we don't have all of the digital pieces sitting in a little digital department in the centre, so I think that's how it's changing. The people in the traditional roles are having to skill up and be mentored, perhaps by the experts in digital in that company, to learn. So that's the main thing. It's the blurring of the boundaries.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay. Thank you. How does that work for your company and for you personally Harry?

**Harry Blom** - In our company we see some of the same things, but we try to leverage the knowledge and experience that's everywhere within the company across the departments. You may be a mathematics editorial assistant, but you're online all the time, so you have lots of knowledge and information about what interests you. So what we're trying to do is to create virtual teams, having people from very different departments talk to each other about certain topics, just to get on the table what really needs to be happening and also to have this go across generations, because things change so rapidly you need to keep in touch with the people who are just coming out of college. The top managers, they listen to them and say: okay, so what do you think we should do? I think creating that open culture of information exchange is beneficial, well it's actually essential now, to keep the company alive and on the right course.

**Maarten Asscher** - Jos de Mul, you had this wonderful phrase 'interface value' which I liked very much. You were talking about the interface value not on the side of the exploration but on the side of the market. What do you, in your experience as a published author, see in terms of the development of this interface value with publishers? Is it developing in the right way? In the right direction? Or in your experience are publishers still very much looking for the right definition of this interface value?

**Jos de Mul** - I think the latter is the case. We are in a situation at the moment where there is an overwhelming amount of information surrounding us and we are still in a state of confusion and looking for the right ways to deal with it. So I think there are not yet very convincing answers available, or we are still experimenting in many different directions without yet finding the holy grail.

**Maarten Asscher** - And is the holy grail rather to be found in a big publisher, with many multimedia divisions and national business units in various countries, or is the grail perhaps to be found in the smaller-scale, enhanced, entrepreneur type of publisher. What is your view?

**Jos de Mul** - I hope that the grail will be connected with a sector of publishing. What we see now, of course, and Apple is a very good example, is that there's a kind of... Well, the internet was always open, a kind of openness was also the thrill of the internet. Everything accessible, everything available, everything for free and information wants to be free – this kind of 1990s discourse. We see now an opposite direction, and Apple is very successful in this and even threatening I think in many respects, because they make a very closed system, which is easy to handle. It's convenient, it's safe in a way because you don't have to worry about viruses all the time. It's easily searchable, the apps and the iPad. So of course this has many advantages but I also think we lose a lot of the attractions of internet, and of a kind of community spirit that sparkles, when it transfers to such a big company that is of course in the final analysis invested in profits and not so much in cooperation. When this is a way leading to profit then they will do it, but if not then they will take the short route to profit.

**Maarten Asscher** - Yes, please.

**James Boekbinder** - May I respond quickly to that? I find you've left out one advantage to Apple's system. It was also an ethical improvement. It gave me a way, and other people a way, of ethically buying music, for example, or other things, paying legally and not being burdened with an ancient, cracking system of CDs and things, of physical bearers. It's not just about convenience and money, it also created a legal and ethical way to buy things. I think that we can't leave that out, because that wonderful open world that many pundits were happy about in the nineties is a world of piracy and chaos, really. And most people didn't really find any advantage in it. Because things aren't free, is the point.

**Jos de Mul** - Yes perhaps it also has to do with the fact that I'm coming from the domain of science which always has been a kind of chaotic sphere of piracy, because you take ideas from others and combine them with other ideas and you add something and that's what science is all about. Scientists always, well, nowadays it's also changing because there's a lot of money and policy involved, but the better scientists in my view are still driven by a desire to know things, to find things out and to share things with others and to speak out loud about what they have found, and they are happy to be heard. For that reason they put a lot of effort into their books without earning a lot for it, because they are more interested in that than in the business side. But I think you're right, for a market economy this is a very important aspect of Apple's approach as well.

**Maarten Asscher** - Richard Nash, would you like to make a comment? I saw your hand waving just now.

**Richard Nash** - I suppose I was having there a sort of a reaction to the notion that no one benefitted from openness in the 1990s.

**Sara Lloyd** - An allergic reaction.

**Richard Nash** - It was an allergic reaction. Because there is an entire generation of independent publishers that couldn't be imagined without it. So there's a couple of dimensions along which I'd have to argue for the falsifiability of that, to use some scientific discourse. I think there's also the fact that we only had the invention of piracy in the last 150 years. There couldn't be anything pirated if there was no copyright and our societies generated tremendous amounts of knowledge without it. So I'm cautious of attributing to Apple and to Apple's DRM [digital rights management] the only method of ethically engaging with culture. There's a very, very strong case that culture is by its very nature something that is part of the commons, and so an ethical case can be made on the opposite side. Now I agree from a practical standpoint that it created an ecosystem that was tremendously convenient, but I'd be wary of giving that too much ethical import.

**Maarten Asscher** - Thank you. I would like to go back for a moment to Harry, to the way you described the corporate relations, the corporate atmosphere in your company with – if I may sum it up as a bit of a cartoon – the elderly pre-digital managing directors listening eagerly to what the young editors and editorial assistants are coming up with. I think this cartoon is not

so ludicrous as it might sound. There is I think a challenge in any publishing company at the moment to combine two generations, two communities, two spheres of thinking, the twittering multimedia, interactive-conscious under-thirties and the people who have been working in publishing for twenty-plus years. Is that a divide in the publishing profession as I now sketch it, or is that too much of a cartoon?

**Harry Blom** - Yes it is maybe a bit too much of a cartoon. I mean definitely the senior top managers read about what's going on as well and there's definitely also an exchange of information where what goes to the younger generations is all about a sense of business. Like: you want to spend half your time programming new apps, but what price are we going to put on it and are we actually going to make money with it? And then they look at it and think: oh, yeah, I guess it costs a lot of money and maybe we won't recoup it, so maybe I should be doing something else. So I think definitely information goes both ways. But I do believe, especially within a big company, that leveraging information and experience, creating a meritocracy, is essential to survival in a globalizing world.

**Maarten Asscher** - What is your experience here, Sara?

**Sara Lloyd** - I would say also it's very much two ways, and I think the open collaborative culture that we were talking about where the boundaries are not too fixed is where you get the most benefit in a company. I'm pleased to say I work in a company like that and it's just incredibly motivating. It's great because I would say I'm right in the middle of your split. I'm not telling you which side I sit on just now.

**Maarten Asscher** - So you have to fight your way in both directions.

**Sara Lloyd** - I'm at the interface between generations. It's a very good place.

**Maarten Asscher** - How is that for the people from the Dutch publishing houses, this digital divide? Is it a reality or is it just a theoretical assumption?

**Emile op de Coul** - I work at Querido, and Nijgh & Van Ditmar, and Athenaeum Publishers, and it's fair to say that although we're a fairly small company within a larger concern – we're working with fifty or sixty people in total – on the publishing side, so where the publishers are, they are overall not very experienced with the digital side of publishing. But also sometimes it's, as Harry said, for a good reason, because especially in Holland the turnover

and the results from digital publishing are so very small. So I'd say there is a generational difference. I think our company is small enough that those two worlds can be combined into a new one, but there's still a lot of work to be done, for sure.

**Maarten Asscher** - Other comments? Jeroen Sondervan.

**Jeroen Sondervan** - Yes, I'm from Amsterdam University Press. Our company has twenty-three employees, so it's really a small company compared to Springer, your company. What I see – and I'm thirty-one and I'm twittering and I'm using social media as a publisher – is that because of the smallness of the company we have just four publishers and they are really involved in the digital things that are going on right now. I also see that in the marketing department. So publishers and the marketing department are really closely connected to each other and have to be closely connected to each other I think. As for the editing department, for instance, it's quite a bit less important to be into those questions, but it is still important. I'm the youngest publisher and we have some older publishers, but we are really discussing this sort of thing for years now.

**Maarten Asscher** - Thank you. Yes.

**Martien de Vletter** - I'm from SUN publishers and I'm responsible for the architecture, landscape and urbanism books. There are a few things to say. I think my part, the architecture part, is relatively small. We're part of a bigger company of about forty or fifty people. But as you said, there are two things, there's e-publishing and e-marketing, and they're closely connected, but there's also a difference. For example, if you talk about social media it turns out that the people who buy our architecture books, the architects, critics and historians, are not so into all this. They all have their iPhones and an iPad but they don't twitter at all, they don't use LinkedIn for example, which is very strange in a way, because they're very... Well, they love gadgets and so on. So there is also this other side to what your public is doing. When it comes to e-publishing but also e-marketing, you have to understand what kind of gadgets or whatever your public is using. And the other side is of course where to find the information on your books or whatever you publish, how your public can find that. It's not always in the general bookstores anymore, so you need to find many other ways to send the information out and therefore understand where and how to find that public and that audience.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay. Yes.

**Henry Volans** - I'm obviously not Dutch, but jumping in on this, I just think it's important that this sense of the so-called digital divide doesn't become self-fulfilling. I'm twenty-nine and a very poor twitterer. I mean, the interesting thing about Twitter is that a lot of young people don't use it, and don't get it, and a lot of the best are a literate older age group. Also, from my experience, I think judging or second-guessing for any particular market how into social media or not they are is a pretty thankless task and it's better just to assume that they will be, or some will be, and do something and see what happens and follow from that. So I think finally, in a publishing sense, if you believe too much in clear divides of age – I actually think it's a personality divide rather than an age divide as to who uses these things – that risks becoming real, and publishers will fail if there's a sense that it's a closed shop and not open to everyone. But it's a hard thing making an entire company realize that they don't sit there needing guidance from a digital division but that they have the agency to just go on and act themselves.

**Maarten Asscher** - Excellent, thank you. When we talk about e-marketing and channelling to an audience, the main marketing effort of a traditional publishing house went through the retailers, with point-of-sale material and in-store promotion etcetera. How does, for example, Pan Macmillan add this direct audience-targeted marketing effort to its traditional orientation? It will mean a lot more organizational costs, because you have to do both now, instead of concentrating on retailers.

**Sara Lloyd** - Yes, we're in quite an awkward hump really, where we're actually having to add some extra people overall. So I think the important thing is not to add 'a digital person' to do 'tweeting'. It's important to add more resources overall so that everyone has more time to do those things. Some of the ways we're doing it are where we have particularly strong brands, or where we have particularly strong list or lists that we want to grow, particular categories, we're trying to build platforms around those so we can talk directly to our consumers and learn about them and engage with them. Of course that means you have to develop content that's engaging, because it's all really about the content and the community experience being something they want to become part of. So we're doing that. Also, on a campaign by campaign basis, we're very much looking to existing communities. We don't try to build a community for everything we do, because that would be an 'if we build it they will come' kind of strategy. So what we're doing is taking existing communities – and often they're offline communities with an online component, which is actually where I think your best

communities can lie – and doing for example live, real-time events but with a link to things that are then going on online, and obviously tweeting them and circulating information about them, circulating video of them on the internet. So doing some of that connectivity between real events and online components, and then having an ongoing strategy in between to keep that conversation going, is a really big part of what we do in our marketing now. And it's in the marketing department, it's not in my department. There's a lot of conversation that goes on between those two areas and sometimes we work together, sometimes we facilitate something happening there, or help them with some resources so that we act as a virtual team, so there's more heads if we work together than if we do separate things. If that answers your question.

**Maarten Asscher** - Yes, I think so. Yes.

**Erik Rigters** - I work at ebook.nl, which is part of a publishing group, and there's one word that I learned that works in this story, to bring it into complete company with the publisher, the marketing, and that's measurement. Because online marketing is very good to measure, and although people tend to enjoy a good review in the newspaper and think that has a huge impact on the sales, the measurement we can do in online marketing is at least something we can compare with the previous campaigns we did. I find that publishers and marketing people who are used to being in the old model, if you want to call it that, enjoy the facts and figures on their campaigns.

**Sara Lloyd** - Yes, data is the number one.

**Eppo van Nispen tot Sevenaer** - I'm the director of Collective Promotion for the Dutch Book, that's publishers, libraries and booksellers together, and I come from the entertainment industry. And I'm a nerd. I'm more like Harry Blom. The funny thing is that Harry studied astrophysics and that's a peculiar study that you don't talk about in bars.

**Maarten Asscher** - He has un-nerded himself.

**Eppo van Nispen tot Sevenaer** - But the funny thing I always learned, and you talked about it, is the bit about metadata. One of the UK's department stores, in London, Selfridges, had a great slogan when they had existed for a hundred years: 'I didn't find it, it found me.' Because I talk to publishers now, and after seven months working for this great foundation I find that

there's a big lack of metadata. I think data is very sexy. I'm not the only one who thinks it is; Apple thinks it is; Springer thinks it is. Once you've got the data, and you see it if you go to big publishers like Sanoma Magazines, they collect what they call profiling. They make an automatic profile of somebody who's getting to one website, starting to get a usage, and they try to combine all these data and then they get a profile. I think there's a great lack of experience among publishers with these metadata systems. I never hear them talk about it, they always talk about e-marketing, and then social media, but social media doesn't bring you your richness. It's funny. I would push for more nerds in publishing companies, to understand that metadata will be the ultimate resolution for everything.

**Sara Lloyd** - I think actually, rather than getting nerds into the publishing company, it's important to make your editors into nerds. Because for me if the publisher or the editor doesn't get the importance of the metadata, you're never going to be anywhere, because really they're the primary source within a publishing company of the passion about something. Their head is on the line about how many copies that book sells and they care about getting the marketing people to support the book and they care about getting the publicity people to support the book and care about the channels supporting the book. So for us, one of the things that we've been really trying to do is internal mentoring and training of the editors to get them to care about the data, because for them it's a task and it's quite boring, well it's very boring, but if they understand the result of the task and the impact of the task, they can start to engage with it. The secondary supporting factor is to have a system which is so easy to use in terms of your product information system, and so delightful to engage with that the editors can really feel happy about doing it. That's something that publishers often don't have because we have very antiquated systems sometimes. So I think those two things together, the kind of, well, 'training' makes it sound a little bit formal, but it's actually more about almost evangelizing, for want of a better term, the importance of data. I think it's difficult because it has traditionally sat with the nerds or the systems guys and people don't realize the importance of it.

**Maarten Asscher** - You have another question for Sara?

**Eppo van Nispen tot Sevenaer** - I'm rather interested whether you are using, at Springer or Pan Macmillan, profiling systems like the big magazine publishers do. Their strategy is to have lots of websites where they can do that. Are you using profiling?

**Harry Blom** - No, we don't use profiling much, but anyhow sometimes the information is not coming back to Springer, it's sometimes with the people who are selling our books. In terms of measuring I think the most we do is when we send out e-mails. First of all people can tell us about the sort of information they would like to see. So if we publish new astronomy books then we can send out an e-mail to the people who told us that they would like to get an e-mail about those. That message has links out to our website and you can measure opening rates, click-through rates, so that's where the matrix comes in when it comes to Springer. But we're not using profiles yet. We're starting to do that. We have 'My Springer', so authors can have their own page on our website and probably we can ask some questions about their preferences, but it's very much in its infancy at the moment.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay. You wanted...

**Jos de Mul** - May I add something to this? I completely agree in the sense that I think the ontology behind computing is the database, the database ontology, the ABCD of computing: Add, Browse, Change and Delete. It's behind every computer programme and I think the main part of the interface that I was talking about is interface towards databases. Profiling is important, and data-mining, because there's a lot of information out there that's implicit still, which you can find with data-mining. You see that in all the major sciences at the moment that are really at the forefront of developments, like bionics. It's all about data-mining. Because first there was a very naive thing about one gene one function, but now we understand that genes work in networks. But if you have 25,000 different genes, try to imagine the number of possible combinations of that. So it's all about data-mining and all about profiling nowadays. I think that's true also in an economic system, where you have a lot of information and everything becomes a database. Then you need these kinds of instruments to deal with that information.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay. Yes please.

**Ramy Habeeb** - I was just curious on a very practical basis. In the UK you have what's called a BIC Basic record, which is I think ten fields. I'm not sure what the US equivalent is, or the Dutch equivalent for that matter, but when speaking about metadata a BIC Basic record is author, publisher, title, number of pages, format, price. What are the additional fields that are of most importance in this brave new world?

**Richard Nash** - I certainly heard just three days ago that author biographical information is the most important, probably. US librarians made that very explicit at Digital Book World, that there's radically insufficient reliable author biographical data going into a lot of publishing metadata.

**Sara Lloyd** - For me it was summarized by what I was trying to say earlier, which was that it's all the data that really sells the book and that really gives you a voice around the book. And probably, in fact definitely, the standards have to catch up and create some more fields, but the standards guys are working on that I'm sure. I don't think there's one particular thing for me, it's just about more qualitative... It's about the sales person for your book inputting metadata.

**Ramy Habeeb** - So it's per book? Case by Case?

**Peter Collingridge** - I was actually on the panel on enhanced metadata at Digital Book World and I think Sara's description of your metadata becoming your most passionate bookseller is the most succinct and important description of the job that metadata does. Actually I began my career at a publishing house. It was inputting metadata for every single title on their list, and then seeing how that metadata directly affected the Google ranking of those books, that turned me into a digital publisher, that made me see: my God if I put the first chapter up here, if I put an extract, if I put an interview with the author, if I put a long bio, if I put a photo, all of this stuff directly affects the page ranking and the search engine listing of these titles. And I've got to say, the bar is really low for a search engine ranking. It's really easy to become number one on Google and it's the single most effective thing that you can do. Social media marketing is not free, for a start, it's really expensive in terms of time. Because first of all Twitter is a broadcast medium that goes very quickly into a dialogue medium. There's no kind of middle way, so you end up either broadcasting, which is just like publishing, throwing stuff out there, or you're talking directly to one person, which doesn't really benefit your marketing and it doesn't benefit your search engine optimization. Putting stuff on a website, whether it's your website or Amazon's... Actually Amazon is very bad at supporting enhanced ONIX and ONIX now caters for as many of these fields as you can put in. So I think the standards are good, but you know, my view is that standard metadata is bibliographic data that goes to the book trade. Enhanced metadata is stuff that influences consumers when they purchase, and whether it's location, BIC catalogue codes... There's an anecdote this morning that there was a

book on Random House's catalogue for which they changed the subject category from something to something else and it created a four hundred percent increase in sales, just in terms of where that target was being discovered. The single most effective piece of digital marketing you can do is to channel the passion of the editors into putting rich metadata out onto the web, ideally on your own website.

**Nicky Harman** - I have a question. It's really a follow-up from that. One of the authors that I've translated, Xinran, who happens to be a largely non-fiction author, is absolutely tireless in her travelling around the world hosting events which promote her books. I would love to propose to Xinran that she should stay at home and do it on video instead and have that as the kind of enriched data that you've talked about, out on air, so that she doesn't have to physically go around and exhaust herself with promoting her book. What I'd really like to know is: is this happening as the data on books gets richer? Is it likely that authors (and also as a translator I've had to do the same thing) will be able to have their virtual image online and not have to travel around the world doing this?

**Sara Lloyd** - No. I don't think that would be a good idea. I think the digital stuff can partially replace but largely supplement. I don't think you can actually replace the physical engagement of meeting someone in the flesh and particularly for certain authors, you know, people love meeting them, and they love meeting them in person and shaking their hand and all that. So I think that there will need to be both, and there will be partial replacement and partial supplementation, but it's really about developing a richer experience by adding digital rather than replacing. Perhaps a little bit of that, perhaps going a long way and travelling a long way to promote your books won't always be necessary, but I think if we lose the ability to socialize in person I'd be quite concerned.

**James Boekbinder** - I'm an information architect, I create metadata and content strategies for very large companies, and I want to come back with a question for Sara about one of her first points. You mentioned that there are facsimile books and also enhanced interactive books, and you mentioned a number of things that we now have to do to make sure that those are appealing to consumers. Because you said that the consumer appetite is not entirely clear. You mentioned added value. Can you give us some examples? An example of a publication, an e-book, which succeeded with this added value in creating that?

**Sara Lloyd** - In the trade space I think Russell Brand's book, which is a very stripped, very simple enhanced e-book, in that it added some extra video. But because it was Russell Brand, who, if you don't know, is a very well known cult kind of comic icon in the UK, and a TV personality and elsewhere. I think that was an example of a publisher very simply just saying: do you know what, this guy, people want more of him and if in the e-book there's something that is just solely for the e-book, exclusive to the e-book, of him being funny, then they'll pay for that. But that's a very simple version. I think if it's an unknown non-fiction author writing on a specific subject and they're interviewed and you stick that in the e-book, no one's going to pay extra for that and it's not going to particularly do anything for you. I think publishers are already changing on this very quickly, but at the beginning there were a few people just chucking stuff in. They were creating perhaps marketing assets and videos and they just stuck them in the e-book as well, and that's really a mindless way of approaching it. I don't think there are loads of good examples that spring to mind because it's very difficult. Even while I'm saying that the Russell Brand idea was a good idea, I don't know what it sold, because there's no way of me accessing that information. So data again comes into play. That's one of the difficult things. We can all do our own experiments, which is really where enhanced e-books are. It's in the R&D element of the company because it's about actually working out: what do I gain by doing this? What does the author gain? What does the profile of the book gain? Is it that we can charge more? Is it that we get better placement? Is it basically a paid-for marketing tool? Actually, should it be free? So all of these are things we are trying to find out by doing them and it's very early days.

**Harry Blom** - I think actually with Springer the best examples are the books that have software in them and those are really the more academic books, like Wolfram's *Mathematica*. If people want to use the routines in order to get the results that are described in the book, then they also really like to have the software. I think that's the best example.

**Maarten Asscher** - Harry, I'd like to carry on about this e-marketing and targeting the audience. You mentioned that someone could subscribe to a newsletter about new astronomy books from your company. But that someone would then also have to subscribe to a newsletter from MIT Press and from Random House etcetera. In the old days, three minutes ago, that someone, living in Denver Colorado, would subscribe to the newsletter of The Tattered Cover Book Store and have all the astronomy books channelled towards him. What I understand from the developing picture of how publishing is moving on is that the function of

the publisher vis à vis the public is sort of stretched almost beyond what a bookseller used to do, in searching for individual customers for individual books, or series, or subjects. It is of course a threat to booksellers, I realize that, on the other hand there are still so many printed books in your catalogue that you cannot do without those booksellers altogether. So in a way you have to do both. You cannot drop the one channel and completely shift to the other. This means enormous investments in the next couple of years. Is there a sort of future investment programme that takes this into account? Or is it more a matter of taking the city street by street?

**Harry Blom** - There's a lot of questions in there. I think it's about pool marketing as they call it. Again I think metadata come up. What you want is for people that you can sell to to find you easily. I think there is software out there that harvests whatever is interesting for a person's needs, what is published by the various publishers, so they don't necessarily have to engage with one publisher. If your metadata is very rich and accurate, people will then be able to use that harvesting software successfully to find you. And then I think indeed the middle man, meaning retail, could be squeezed out. That is of course not necessarily something that we are worried about. So I think they will evolve as well and I'm sure they'll find a role for themselves and maybe help with the pool marketing or be better at pool marketing. So yes, I think there is an investment coming up in being more successful in pool marketing and then we'll see what happens with the other parties in the value chain.

**Maarten Asscher** - For example, Govert Schilling, whom you have published in English translation. Was that a purely conventional book edition or... This was a year ago, two years ago?

**Harry Blom** - Two years ago, yes.

**Maarten Asscher** - Or did you already try out these enhanced strategies and extra things on that publication?

**Harry Blom** - It was still fairly traditional, but we did. Especially if you have a little bit of a background in the field, you add lots of catchphrases to the book metadata. So you really sit down and think: okay, what if I'm searching for a book like the one Govert published, *The Hunt for Planet X*? What am I then searching for? So you think: okay, there's 'solar system explained', 'planet discovery', and you go on and on and on and create a really long list, and

of course this is a very manual thing to do but as was argued before you can then actually test how successful the catchphrases are by going back to Google and trying them out and seeing if the book is moving up in the search results. But you have to almost make it a pet project. My team was at some point publishing 1.5 titles per day, so you need lots of people and editors to do this on an ongoing basis.

**Maarten Asscher** - Jos de Mul, have you engaged in this, in catchphrase lists, as an author?

**Jos de Mul** - No, I've not been very active in it and I'm not sure whether my publishers were active in it either. I think that mouth-to-mouth advertising still is very, very important. Take for example the books of mine published in China. I often get e-mails from Chinese colleagues and most of the time they heard about it from colleagues. Sometimes they found something on the web, and that's important, and of course this is a relatively small community of scholars but this is still a very important kind of...

**Maarten Asscher** - Physical twittering, in a way.

**Jos de Mul** - Well of course also by e-mail, so it's not only physical contact, but I mean it's not always via the channels of website searches. I think what's interesting is the question about finding what you want to look for. For the past one or two years at Erasmus University we have a library that has added over the past decade very many online resources from different publishers and different channels. It was very confusing because looking for a publication could be very time-consuming and now they've added one search field. They call it 'sEURch' – the 'EUR' is the Erasmus University Rotterdam. You get one field and it covers all the resources of the library. And it's fantastic. I think it was the single most successful thing they did in the past two decades at the Erasmus University library. Really. It is. Because of course adding all those online bases was important as well, but this was the big jump. So you said: now we have very successful access to all this information, with one single search field. So I think that's also very important for publishers. Of course it's also your competition you're dealing with, but at the same time if you're interested in astrophysics you don't want to search all the different publishers one by one.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay, thank you. Yes, please.

**Angus Phillips** - I was just thinking about how some of the smaller players in the UK have had to cope with the physical book trade being hard for them over the past few years, with the big chains being less willing to see some of the smaller publishers. They've had to develop their own strategy as to how to get around not having a physical book trade to work through in the same way. I'm thinking about some of the successful niche players that we've got in England. For example, in the craft area, craft publishers are selling through different retail outlets. They know who their customers are. They've got newsletters going out by e-mail, those kinds of things. I'm thinking of a military history publisher in Oxford who's very successfully developed a community around their publications. They don't need the physical book trade in the way that they would have done before, and on the internet it's to some extent a much more level playing field for some of these players. They can see directly by how their books go up and down on Amazon the effects of their promotional activities, and they don't have to worry about giving huge discounts to the large chains or the supermarkets to get their books in there. And they're much more engaged with their communities. They know who they are. They're working with them on a direct basis and I think that if the physical book trade does disappear, there are signs from what the independent publishers are doing, and very successfully over the past few years, that there are different strategies for working around that. I'm thinking that where Harry's coming from, in academic publishing, journals create communities using Facebook, for example, where publishers are talking directly to their readers. If the physical book trade does go then I think there are new strategies there for publishers to use. Though I suppose the big question then is discoverability and it comes back to the data you've been talking about.

**Sara Lloyd** - I saw a really interesting publisher website. I think they publish books and magazines, and they're American, I can't remember who they are, but their website was organized not by products, not by company structure, but by communities, which is an overused word, but it was just an interesting thing. You went to their website and you said which community you're part of. Are you into crafts and hobbies, are you into, whatever, I can't remember all the categories.

**Richard Nash** - Was it F&W you mean?

**Sara Lloyd** - Yes. That's right. And then when you were in there and you started looking around, you'd just dive into one of those community pages. It's everything they're doing

around that, so it's a forum and it's books and it's other things as well. I just thought that reflected what you were saying. I don't know what the size of F&W is, I'd never heard of them until this week, but I think they're quite large but operate in a number of verticals. It's something that Mike Schatzkin, who I'm sure many of you know, has always said for many years, this idea that we're going to need to be much better at operating around deep verticals. That goes for the big companies as well as the smaller companies, so deciding which of the verticals you want to focus your activity around is going to be important.

**Angus Phillips** - Romance is another area where, to take Mills and Boon, they know exactly who their readers are and they're doing big things with e-books now as I understand it.

**Sara Lloyd** - Yes, romance is one of the biggest categories. I missed that out when I was talking about the categories that are working very well, but Harlequin in the States and Mills & Boon as well are both doing incredibly well in e-books.

**Maarten Asscher** - The good thing about reading such stuff on your e-reader is that nobody knows that you're reading it.

**Sara Lloyd** - Nobody knows what you're reading. I deny it all.

**Maarten Asscher** - Yes, we'll go in that direction.

**Martien de Vletter** - I want to add something. I think it covers a few of these discussions. I'm a relatively new publisher. The publishing company that I work for is old, but I started three years ago in architecture, urbanism and landscape and I had two frustrations, basically, when I started. First of all the books that I published, it was more difficult, as I think has been mentioned, to get it into the bookshops worldwide. We publish a lot of books in English and in other languages as well. So you think you've published a good book but it's not easy to get it into a bookshop, and especially for this niche it's very difficult. And on the other hand as a book buyer I was also frustrated in a way because I thought all the descriptions on Amazon, all the captions explaining what the book is, are very bad and I have to click four times and after clicking it turns out the book is not available. So that was two things. So we started up a webshop. We took the initiative to ask about ten international publishers of architecture books to put their catalogues in the webshop. It's only about architecture, urbanism and landscape architecture: [architecturebooks.eu](http://architecturebooks.eu). It is in a way comparable to what you said about niches

compared to what Amazon does, covering everything, because this is very much a niche. It works very simply; it's like hotel booking, so there's no stock. Every publisher has their own stock and they should be able to send out the books themselves, but the customer buys a book at the webshop. The webshop sends the message to the publisher and the publisher sends the book to the customer. So as a publisher, because you have to send it yourself, you actually know who your customer is, whereas with the books we sell through Bol or Amazon I have no idea who is actually buying the book. With the retailers I could at least go to them and ask them: who do you think bought this book? So you miss a lot of information through selling your books via the internet unless you do it yourself. And I think that also gives you a lot of capital. I mean basically it's the gold amongst the knowledge. You have to know who you're selling to and by doing this you actually can sell it. What you see now is that it's also difficult, I'm not saying it's easy to do this. We own the webshop, so when books don't get delivered people complain and that's the really bad part of the whole thing.

**Maarten Asscher** - That's bookselling as it is.

**Martien de Vletter** - Exactly, so I'm not very proud of that. But in a way it works, and it also starts to work in the sense that there are now initiatives from other publishers who say, well, we're also in the academic field, can we not add a review system for academic reviews of certain books? And so on. So it also grows in ways that I had not foreseen at all, and in that sense I learn a lot from it, by seeing what happens. I also see of course that the sales within the Netherlands are quite small because we still have many bookshops here, but if you go to the eastern part of southern Germany there are fewer bookshops and the sales there are higher. It's quite interesting to see, especially for the smaller publishers. Because of course the bigger publishers... Random House wants to join but they cannot join because they're not able to deliver the books themselves. They use big companies that send out their books, and Springer for example as well, so that is also interesting. Especially for niche publishing it is an interesting way of selling.

**Maarten Asscher** - Interesting case story. Thank you very much. Peter?

**Peter Collingridge** - I think this is really, really interesting. I just want to share two things. One of them is a quotation from an American business thinker. He's quite controversial and he's quite annoying. His name is Seth Godin and he's very well known, but he gave a talk to the American Independent Publishers' Association in April of last year and it's available as a

podcast for free online. I'd recommend that everybody listen to it because it's probably the most insightful twenty-five minutes on the future of publishing that I've heard for a long time. Basically what he's saying is that publishing is dying because content is infinitely available online, and the days of publishers being filters between authors and readers are changing immeasurably. Probably the most resonant sound-bite that came out of it is that it's time to stop trying to find readers for your writers and time to find writers for your readers. So it's this idea of collecting readers around subjects and then matchmaking writers to those needs. This is what Sara was talking about with verticals. It's what we see used very effectively in the magazine industry. It's what we see in the entertainment industry, but it's also what you see at Harlequin Mills & Boon. Last year we produced a community website for Mills & Boon in the UK which was specifically targeted at the problem that they have. They are unlike many publishers I know in the UK in that they understand who their readership is. They do a lot of market analytics and they're obviously brand-focused rather than author-focused, and their biggest problem is that while most of their readers buy on average fifty or sixty books from them a year the average age of that readership is fifty-five or sixty, so this is obviously a market that is dying, or is going to die quite soon.

**Sara Lloyd** - At fifty-five?!

**Peter Collingridge** - Well, it's, you know, it's...

**Maarten Asscher** - In my remaining two years I'm going to...

**Peter Collingridge** - It's... Well yes...

**Sara Lloyd** - Say it's greying. That's probably better.

**Peter Collingridge** - Well you really need to find replacements. If there's going to be a strategy, and there will be, then what's going to happen? So Mills & Boon rebranded in the UK. They did a design rebrand to connect with younger readers and they came to us said: we want to do some more stuff. So we built them a site that uses Facebook, Facebook Connect, and one of the great things about Facebook Connect is that it gives you demographic information about your users. So if you require people to do that, you can actually track who they are, what age they are, where they live, what other stuff they like to read. I think it's that kind of activity that is fundamental in terms of really trying to understand where the future of

book buying and reading is going to be. I think the idea of these niches and verticals is fascinating.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay. Thank you very much Peter.

**Richard Nash** - To amplify what Peter was just discussing, I'm reminded of something that Jos mentioned that we didn't pick up on yet, which was that in the academy you guys are doing your own damn peer review now. One of the things that's kind of been a thread through the conversation for the last hour is a sort of flattening. It was implied in the discussion of hierarchies within publishing companies. It was avoided in the discussion around metadata, because it was assumed that publishers create metadata, that metadata's a one-way stream and the publisher is the authority, but it's resurfaced here when we're talking about verticals, at least in a sense. Some of these verticals are just about aggregating and pushing, but a true vertical basically requires that there is no consumer, that everybody in a community is a potentially equal member of that community, potentially creative. That creativity may involve writing a book, that creativity may involve editing metadata, that creativity may involve recognizing that metadata is the opinion of the community and each individual unit of opinion within the community is a legitimate metadata point that can be understood. One thing I noted when I was running an independent publisher that was quite niche – it was hybrid fiction and non-fiction but the non-fiction was largely narrative – our SEO [search engine optimization] was appallingly bad, but people loved the brand. It was a tremendously open brand. Our readers felt ownership of the brand. And so the conversation that would go on around the brand was so rich and dynamic that it more than compensated for our appalling SEO, to the point that we published a novel called *Guantanamo* that would appear in the Google search rankings above Amnesty International's special report on Guantanamo, because of the power of the links of thousands of bloggers and live journal kids that had gone on over the years. But you really have to be quite radically humble as a publisher in order to engender that level of participation from your community.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay, thank you very much. One brief response. Yes, please.

**Jos de Mul** - Yes, I think this is really important because one of the effects of a digital network is that the distinction between producers and consumers becomes blurred. So we're into this notion of the 'prosumer', as a person who is doing both things, if it's the case that publishing is now more about adding value than just giving content. For example, in the open

design movement there is the idea of giving the content away for free but letting people pay for the added value. That can be very successful because they already have the content and they will want to have more. If that's the case, then the consumer becomes a very important part of the production of the value. I think this is one of the big successes of Amazon.com, because a lot of this value is not only the data-mining behind it, where you look at the behaviour of the buyer. That's important, but just as important is the production of the consumer, the reviews that the readers are writing. That's often very interesting. When I read reviews on Amazon.com that say the book is marvellous or the book is shit, then that's very important for me as a reader. So as to the idea about 'do you have to look for readers for your authors or authors for your readers?' In a way I think we have to go beyond this opposition and see how to connect the prosumers.

**Maarten Asscher** - Yes. Well then the main issue is of course that everybody who stands between readers and authors has to prove himself by adding value otherwise he will become irrelevant, and I think that the notion of interface value will guide us on even over lunch. We will discuss this at more length this afternoon. I'd like warm applause for Sara Lloyd, Harry Blom and Jos de Mul. Thank you so much.

## **Friday 2 - 3.30 pm**

### **What's next?**

**Maarten Asscher** - Welcome back everybody after a lovely dessert, if I may speak for myself. We have covered already quite some ground in our first morning session. We went from Plato to physical twittering, and in this first afternoon session we'll be even more ambitious, with four instead of three keynote speakers. Physical twittering works with 140 characters, maximum, by the way, so I should limit my introductory remarks. I thought we more-or-less proved Plato wrong this morning, because writing didn't obliterate memory, just as photography didn't obliterate painting, and as digital publishing will not obliterate book publishing as we have known it for the past six hundred years. They will in some way or another co-exist, but in what way? How will this innovative development towards the digital future balance itself against the structures and the values contained in our publishing world as we know it? In other words: what's next? That's the question at the head of our programme for this afternoon and I would like first to ask Henry Volans, head of Faber Digital, to give us his presentation. Henry, please.

**Henry Volans** - Actually before I worked in this area known as digital, I was a non-fiction editor at Faber, and out of nostalgia for that, and conscious of the theme of non-fiction as well as digital today, I wanted to hold up a piece of quality non-fiction, published by Faber a few years ago, because my starting point for today was thinking about digital, but it was also thinking about: what is quality non-fiction? Having worked on that at Faber, it's about teasing out stories, whether from a naval historian or a biographer or a popular scientist. Also, having been a hard-pressed editorial assistant in non-fiction, I know what the relation is, certainly at Faber, between text and everything else. Text is king, the content, and everything else, be that maps or illustrations, is, regrettably, often an afterthought. In this book, Jenny Uglow's biography of the English woodcutter Thomas Bewick, that's not the case. It's a book about a book, or a series of books, and about the art of illustration, so the line etchings, reproduced at the size they were originally reproduced, look good printed on standard or good-quality book stock. But that's an exception. For all too many non-fiction books I've worked on, things like the key site of the battle in the map will be lost in the gutter of the book when it's printed. We're not talking about integrated non-fiction, we're talking about story, and actually I think that's right. My starting point is that if you're making a new kind of product, if digital is going

to lead you into a new kind of non-fiction, you need to have a bloody good reason for doing so. It needs to be an improvement, and in the area of quality narrative non-fiction that means you have to be sure you're not neglecting to do the thing that you've set out to do in the first place. That's what was in the back of my mind as I started working on and thinking about this. It's led actually to a totally new kind of project, which I will talk about briefly and Marcus will tell you more about during his talk. I do think our new project answers Jim's earlier question of what is an example of a successful attempt to do something that's beyond a book, and our *Solar System* for iPad I think is something that was just that.

Before I get on to that and the broader learnings, because I certainly don't want to just talk about one project, I thought I would have a go at answering my own assertions from my very short questions in the programme. I started with: Are apps just the latest gold rush? What has substance and what is snake oil? The answer is: yes, apps are a gold rush. Pretty much all the rational evidence suggests we should leave it alone. After all, isn't it just CD-ROM 2.0? On the other hand, my current view, which hasn't always been the case, is that we cannot afford to do that, we cannot afford to leave that market and it would be wrong to leave that market. I don't really think it's just CD-ROM 2.0. There's no question to me that apps are a phenomenon of our age, that in one form or another will only grow, and the question is: what is a publisher's, or what can be a publisher's role in that universe? There is snake oil, but it's perhaps more round the edges, it's in how you approach it and who you approach it with, and if you apply the same critical processes that you would in any other aspect of your business to apps, I don't see why you can't steer a path through. What I do think is if anything more of a danger is unreasonable expectations, or imbalanced expectations about what you can achieve in a project and at what pace. If you're working with authors, what's their mapping of the landscape beforehand? Are you going in with good knowledge? So that's my answer really, having for a while been cool on apps. In my new role as head of Faber Digital, I work in digital but I'm nothing to do with e-books. It was a deliberate step. I have a budget, I have space to develop projects that go beyond and are quite different, so it suits that agenda, but my view is that if you are ambitious about a small number of projects then you have, in this particular universe, more of a chance of success.

Second: what chance do content-led, paid apps have of succeeding in a world of free, cheap, and advertising-agency-led products? I'm talking about branded apps and marketing and ad agencies pitching for work, which for me was a new experience. I think the honest answer is

that it's touch and go. It will be a fight. My view is that as well as observing and reacting to the nature of this new world and the valuations of content in this world, and adjusting accordingly, you also need to have the courage to stand up for the value of good stuff and of good content, and find places where that can be sold. In various areas I think there's room for a campaign against crap apps, because there's a lot of them and I think that can improve. In the case of a different market, comedy, we've released an app called *Malcolm Tucker's iPhone* that I genuinely think puts the sort of soundboard apps that are being released by people, scandalously including BBC Worldwide, to shame.

Number three: publishers are in a position to claim this digital space, but the current set-up surely hinders innovation. I think that's true but it's changing. I think any publisher should be looking at the various start-ups, from inside or outside publishing, and learning and trying to keep pace or adapt, or just to be conscious of what's going on. There are some in Britain, such as Nosy Crow, the children's start-up, and Touch Press, who are our partners on *The Solar System* and some future projects. There's Peter's company, Enhanced Editions, there are American ones working in children's books, Oceanhouse Media and Callaway, and things like Cursor as well. On the other hand the big established players, as we know, loom ever larger. So as a publisher we need to change on our stance on skills, on our attitude to schedules, on markets, on reach and on who we work with. I think I'm beginning to feel that in general publishers have a wider number of staff than range of skills, and I think probably we need to address that.

So the particular project I embarked on last year, in partnership with Touch Press, in some ways was completely counterintuitive. Sara pointed out that the tablet market accounted for 7% of 1.5% of the book market. So we thought: let's make a proper project only for the iPad, only for that 7% of 1.5%. That's counterintuitive. On the other hand we did everything we could to counterbalance that. It's an absolute keystone of these kinds of projects that they're international, that you have all the rights, and the exciting thing for us is that *The Solar System* was sold directly into the US. The difference there is of course transformational. We were very fortunate in that Apple featured the app as its app of the week in the US, the biggest promotional slot of the lot. At one point ten days ago the app was the third highest grossing iPad app in America across all categories, and both there and here it overtook, here for about a week, overtook Angry Birds, which was to my great satisfaction. Oh, I love Angry Birds. So internationalness is absolutely key.

In terms of money it wasn't cheap to build. We approached its structures like a TV production or as a small film production. There's a production pot, a budget out of which the huge range of skills, which Marcus will talk more about I think, needed to build it was paid. So it was a gamble. As Peter said to me on the way: that's like putting everything all on red. I didn't think it was quite that extreme, and I should add that it's in a portfolio balanced with other projects, other businesses, other strands, but it was definitely characterized by ambition.

I was going to try now to summarize what I've learned from that and some of our other app projects as released just before Christmas, because I think the differences between working on something like that and on a book are vast. One of the characteristics of an app is that it's unconstrained. It's as good as unconstrained in space, certainly as far as text is concerned. The app, by the way, is almost a gigabyte. You can get a lot of pictures in there and a fair bit of video. Obviously there's still a cap in current memory standards on the amount of video you can get in. But books are effectively quite bounded. You can bind up to, what, 1,200 pages, but there's a cap and as I know by experience, the use of images, the use of new media in books is limited. This lack of constraint is a challenge and what I find, and I speak for myself in the inexperienced category, is that the more inexperienced people are in apps, the more they try to put in an app, and people who really know what they're doing chop out ninety percent of what you think needs to go in and keep it to the essentials. That might still be quite a lot, but it's a key practice.

Apps, now this is a real generalization, but I think there's more of a push to subject-led than author-led. *The Solar System*, Marcus won't mind my saying I hope, is more led by the subject than by Marcus. I don't think Marcus would have written a print book on the solar system. It would have been too straight, not angled enough. But at the moment I think the App Store needs something direct. It's not yet mature enough to be taking things of great angle. In a book the interface is taken for granted. You pick it up and you're not surprised by what it makes you do. In an app there's a ferocious focus on the interface, because the interface is different for every app. In the iOS developer guidelines there are some things that are in common, but basically it's an open park. So when you're being reviewed, you're more likely to be reviewed on the interface than on the content. The content sits a bit back.

Judgement in an app is instant and it's on the form, and also on the content, but more on the form. In a book, there's the luxury of a book, it's pretty much judged for its content. There

may be a few passing references about how it's pretty or ugly or it's printed on toilet paper but basically it's about the book. It's also much, much quicker for apps. Clearly on Amazon.com books are reviewed instantly now, but they're reviewed in a more slow, reverential way. Apps are also wide open to comparisons with other forms of entertainment and categories of app. So it's a very wide-open marketplace. While the app was really at the peak and being featured, it sat in between Apple's Pages application and *The Sunday Times*. It's not being compared to itself or to things like itself. There is a books category, but if you want enough sales, then frankly you need to break out of the books category. Apps, certainly in so far as iOS apps for the iPad etcetera are concerned, promotion is an editorial judgement, not paid-for positioning as much of the book market is. Apps are, as we know, largely user-reviewed rather than critic-reviewed, although there is a sort of infrastructure of app reviewing coming along.

Apps are unbelievably, ultra price sensitive, whereas books do largely exist in tiers. Paperback non-fiction is £9.99, fiction £7.99 or £8.99. Of course that's discounted through Amazon, but pricing in apps could be the subject of huge papers, whole conferences. You cannot underestimate how tight-fisted our consumers are and you need to learn to live with that. Apps are mainly bought for themselves rather than leant or gifted still, although you now can.

I've sort of said this before, but the focus is on user experience, interface, functionality, then content. So if you're a content-led business, your thing might only be effectively seen fourth, because people are seeing other things first. With books people are paying for the content but they still assume they're paying for the paper and binding, which consumers perpetually over-value. Apps are publicized predominantly after release, not before release. My publicity department hate me and probably always will. You're reactive, you need to come in and then keep going and keep going, and have a twelve-month plan and not forget about it after it's released.

I think in many of these cases, these general themes, they don't necessarily just refer to apps but they refer to new forms, to digital forms of distributing and selling content and I think that's what's interesting. I feel strongly that apps are simply the most tangible outsider for this kind of thing. There was a very interesting debate about Apple earlier, which I think could go on, but it definitely provides the most robust current market for selling in that kind of way. I'm out of time, so I'll stop, but I think my view so far is that this has shown me that

successful apps can and do make money and can sell well. I don't for a moment say that means you can rest on your laurels. I think one of the excitements and challenges of this market is the need to keep reinventing, the need to keep making things that really stand out, but I'm certainly keen to keep trying. Thanks.

**Maarten Asscher** - Thank you very much, Henry. Any questions from the participants? Sara.

**Sara Lloyd** - Thanks, Henry, that's fantastic. Do you think, and perhaps having Marcus here as well will help, that we need new types of authors who have the vision for something where the content isn't first but the interface is.

**Henry Volans** - I don't necessarily need a new type of author but an author who is willing to approach something new in a way, and Marcus will talk about that, so I won't pre-empt too much of it, but Marcus replies individually to pretty much every tweet in every language, thanks to Google Translate, that mentions this app.

**Marcus Chown** - It's all probably rubbish.

**Henry Volans** - I think as much as anything Marcus's willingness to devote a good three or four months of last year to this, not just to delivering the text but, again, as he will say, long meetings with the people who were responsible for the imagery in the app. I knew Marcus from working with him as an editor before, so I had a sense that he would be adaptable. I think if I were an author I would like to mix this kind of project with a more conventional write-your-own book, but definitely the success of this is producing a lot of authors who've got in touch and said they're interested. So I don't think there's a shortage of people who can see success.

**Sara Lloyd** - Very inspirational.

**Peter Collingridge** - I'd just like to say one thing about that. I've been an editor, I've been in the software and web business. The thing that a project needs, and it's probably a term that is jargony for everyone in publishing, but it's an architect, or it's a kind of user-experience lead, or something like this. Or a producer even, in a film sense. Somebody who's got a vision and has the capabilities to inspire other people to share that vision and deliver their best. In terms of that Seth Godin quotation I was talking about earlier, I think Henry's project is phenomenal, but it was market-led rather than author-led. This wasn't saying: we've got a

new book by Marcus coming out. It was: what can we do that's going to delight a new audience on a new device. I think the ability to deliver projects like that is going to become paramount to the activities of a successful publisher in the digital age. It's not about having editors or authors or sole creators any more. I think certainly in the digital space it's going to become a lot more productive and collaborative.

**Henry Volans** - Just very quickly, my credit in the app is as a producer for Faber & Faber. It's that word, it's the one that captures it perfectly.

**Maarten Asscher** - James.

**James Boekbinder** - A quick question. You mentioned that one of the main capabilities is to be able to say what should be included and what should not. You said that people who really know what they're doing throw ninety percent out and keep what's essential. Can you give us a couple of examples maybe of things that you discovered had to be thrown out, or that you doubted about? Can you illustrate that a little bit with examples?

**Henry Volans** - Yes, I might talk about our next project, which is a defining Faber poem. I'm not meant to say which yet, but this poem exists in a facsimile edition, where you can see it before and after the edits by another famous poet. You can see the manuscript pages and then the typescript pages. But at Faber we sat down and said: yes, that would be amazing, we could have a sort of slider that you move from pre-edited to edited. It sounds lovely but it's just impossible. There's different manuscript pages for each thing, there's different... In the case of *The Solar System*, Touch Press's very successful predecessor is what paved the way for this: *The Elements*. All the objects in that you could see in stereo with 3D glasses. We just didn't have time to have all the planets rendered in 3D, for example. There isn't actually a search function in *The Solar System* app because we didn't have time. That's a slightly bad example because there should be, and that will come.

**Marcus Chown** - Brian May of the rock group Queen has rendered our planets in stereo for us.

**James Boekbinder** - But something that you may have doubted about, that seemed essential but it turned out not to be. I'm really curious about those kinds of decisions in the production process. Perhaps it's a lot to ask for an example like that.

**Henry Volans** - I will certainly think of one during the panel discussion and I'll let you know. I characterize it as the difference between the very early internal Faber meetings, where I would always come out with a headache because it seemed like there was an impossible range of things to do, but you go through the process of 'can a designer design it, the software engineer code it?' and that's really what makes the difference. Put it that way. You need them there as well as the overview.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay.

**Peter Collingridge** - I was just going to say that there is an easy answer to that as well. First of all Steve Jobs says he's much more proud of the things they left out of the iPad than the things they put in. I think there's a great literary corollary there which is a quotation from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry who says 'perfection is achieved not when there's nothing left to add but when there's nothing left to take away'. In terms of our apps, we track all the usage statistics and I was really adamant that I wanted to have the ability to send a paragraph to a friend on e-mail, or put it on Twitter, and we spent, I don't know, a few days on that feature – absolutely nobody uses it. I mean we've got about 0.5% usage case in that. On the other hand, audio sync, the idea of being able to listen to the audio book whilst reading the text and having the two, moving from one to the other, that was a decision that we thought was going to be really important, we spent a hell of a long time working on that feature, and our users absolutely love it. The statistics come back showing that's it's more popular even than video. Yes, publishing's an instinctive business, it's an intuition-led business, but you can inform yourself with the data as well.

**Maarten Asscher** - Two more brief comments and then we'll go on to Marcus. Eppo was raising his hand first and then Ramy.

**Eppo van Nispen tot Sevenaer** - I had a question about gigs because I see that the application takes about 854 megabytes. What was the maximum number of megabytes you thought about? Because the problem is of course that if I put it on an iPad then I have to throw away something else.

**Henry Volans** - Yes, I mean it's true that basically that kind of file size was just set by being very similar to that for *The Elements* for iPad. Some people do mention it, a few people complain about it and at the moment it's just an unavoidable trade-off for putting so much

into something. I've got the 16-gig, the smallest size of iPad, so it does take up a fair bit, but memory capability evolves so quickly that I think in the long run that will be okay.

**Maarten Asscher** - Ramy.

**Ramy Habeeb** - To Peter about the perfection thing. Because I love that feature, tweeting the paragraph, although I've never used it, but conceptually I love the idea of it. Don't you think that there's a danger of tracking statistics on what is used and what's not used to the point where you remove something that just maybe the time for it hasn't come and that eventually it will be an important feature?

**Peter Collingridge** - Well I think what we are doing is going to just make it better. From a user interface perspective our view when we designed our app was to make it as bookish as possible, so we literally used the principles of *The Elements of Typographic Style* by Robert Bringhurst as our typographic rule and we went to book designers to do it, and we also made it look as much like an Apple interface as possible, the idea being that we wanted the fact that this was an e-book to disappear. We wanted people to feel they were reading a book and we were very successful at doing that, I think. But the interface is very minimal so I think one of the things we're going to do is to look at how features like that can be made more obvious to the user, rather than just getting rid of them. More people use that feature than look at the copyright page, for example, in the apps, and given the amount of time that I spend negotiating with publishers about what to put on the copyright page, we'd probably be better off getting rid of that.

**Maarten Asscher** - Thank you Peter, and thanks again Henry for your presentation. This morning the question was 'Where are we now?' Well, we are in the solar system, is the short answer, and I'm very happy to give the microphone over to Marcus Chown for his presentation. Marcus.

**Marcus Chown** - Hi. Well, it's fantastic to be here. Thanks for inviting me. I'm a science writer and as a science writer I'm always interested in new ways of reaching audiences. In the past year I've even taken up stand-up comedy, so when Henry asked me would I be interested in doing an app for the iPad, I jumped at the chance. Now Henry had no expertise at the time, but he found a company called Touch Press, which is a UK/US company that did have the expertise, and as Henry said, they'd create an app called *The Elements*, which essentially

featured the ninety-two naturally-occurring elements and the artificial ones. They created three-dimensional images of artefacts made out of all of these elements, which on the iPad you could rotate, and I think you could zoom in and out, I'm not sure, and you could see them in 3D at very high resolution. They attached stories about each of these elements, informative stories, quirky stories, humorous stories, and provided a lot of data as well. So that was kind of the model, and they launched this app at exactly the same time that the iPad was launched, which I believe was January 2010.

**Richard Nash** - April.

**Marcus Chown** - Oh, okay, April, in America. So they were very, very fortunate because Apple saw this and saw that it showed what the iPad could do and they put it in their television ads. So *The Elements* has done extremely well. I think it's sold about 160,000 copies in less than a year, and that's at \$15, so the revenue, well, you can work it out, I think it's about 2.5 million dollars. Apple takes about a third, something like that. So it's been very, very profitable.

So Henry and Faber decided to work with Touch Press. The idea was that Touch Press would provide the technical expertise, the programming, the design, and that Faber would provide the editorial expertise, obviously its name in publishing and an author, and that's me. So the project that was decided on to be the successor to *The Elements* was, as Henry has said, *The Solar System*. The idea was that instead of featuring the elements, it would feature planets, moons, asteroids, comets, these kinds of things, and on each page we'd present three-dimensional images of these objects taken from real astronomical space-probe data, images that you could zoom in and out of, that you could rotate, that you could tumble end over end, and we'd attach stories that would be informative – again, quirky, humorous – about these objects, with an interactive link to real-time data on these objects, which is through the WolframAlpha system. So that was the idea.

Now this was an incredibly different project for me than my normal projects. As an author you normally have total control, not only over the content of what you write but even the length. But here there was a very large team of people involved and so there were a lot of compromises to be made. I can give you some examples of how it worked. At the beginning of every week I would have a three-hour Skype conference call with the project manager – I mean this had a project manager, it's not like a book – who actually was a windsurfer who

lived on a beach in Kent in the south-east of England, him and the image expert. And we would spend about three hours going through my outline to decide which stories we would cover and which we would discard. Compromises had to be made, because sometimes we had lots of really nice images, so I would then have to write a story that I hadn't thought that I would write.

The project manager had no science background whatsoever, so his input was actually very useful. Sometimes he would say things like: 'The sun is a ball of gas, yet it seems to have a surface, how can that be?' So with his insight into what average, normal people didn't understand I was able to write things that I wouldn't have done if I was writing on my own. In addition to these three-hour meetings about the content, we'd have another three-hour conference call about the images: what we would include, videos, what we might film. I remember one long conversation for about an hour where we discussed whether we could make an ice cube the shape of Saturn and film it in slow motion splashing into a gin-and-tonic. Because Saturn is lighter than water, and if you had a big enough bath it would actually float. Now as it turned out we didn't have time to do that, because we had an A-list of things we really wanted to include in the app and we had a B-list of things that we would include if we had time. And we ran out of time. Time was a really big constraint. I had to write 120 stories about these fifty or sixty objects in about nine weeks, and that meant about sixteen or seventeen of these stories had to be written a week. Some of them had to be researched, because I didn't know anything about them. That was quite a strain and I do remember when I went out for a walk – I live in central London – when I went out for a walk, often to get fresh air, or polluted air, I had to keep stopping every few minutes to scribble things in notepads. I was even waking up in the middle of the night with things that I thought we ought to include in the app. So it was probably the hardest I've ever worked.

In addition to the time constraints there were really, really stringent space constraints, because we decided that in the font that we were using we didn't want anyone to scroll to another page. We thought that would make it too difficult – or not too difficult, but it would be ideal if they read each story on a page, which limited every story to 275 words. So really that was maybe three paragraphs, four paragraphs at the most. So sometimes to introduce a quite complex subject in that amount of space was very, very hard.

Anyway, the app was released on 22 December, which was early enough to catch Christmas but a bit late to get much publicity, to promote it. However, there have been days since then when it's actually sold almost 2,000 a day and the total sales – I'm very indiscreet, Henry – in the first calendar month it sold 25,000 at about \$14, so that's quite a lot of money. I think that Touch Press and Faber have already got back the money they invested in its development.

So would I do this again? Um. Yeah. It was the hardest I've ever worked, but yes, I would do it again. It was fun to work in a large team of people. I'd be lying to you if I said that there weren't difficulties, but the pluses definitely outweighed the minuses. I got to do something which was highly illustrated – I think we got something like 1,000 high-resolution images in the app – and we really did try and push the boundary of what was possible with the iPad and I think we probably did create something with *The Solar System* for iPad that is totally new under the sun. Thank you.

**Maarten Asscher** - Any questions to Marcus, please?

**Jeroen Sondervan** - What I was wondering is, you can see the app as a closed system, but you could also see it as a sort of ongoing writing process, for instance. Have you thought about that, to see the app as like a newspaper, which never stops, which you can update? You can even update your content by using new insights, for instance.

**Marcus Chown** - Well, I'd like to do that, but I'm not sure that Henry would like to. There has to be a finishing point, really, just as with a book when you put it to bed. Otherwise you could spend forever, couldn't you, updating.

**Henry Volans** - It's a tough balance. Obviously the WolframAlpha API brings in live data and the stuff about the relative positions and things. I think it's true of all our apps that it is hard, because obviously if you need to do bug fixes, if there are things to fix, upgrades, you can schedule programmes of upgrades and that's important. I think though that there's a temptation never to stop, and that would prevent you getting on with new projects. So you have to bear that in mind. Touch Press and us, we try to avoid calling it an app. It's a book that happens to suit the iPad, that the iPad makes possible at the moment. Touch Press would tend to call it an e-book. Within the publishing industry that's got a different connotation. So 'book' it is and that's actually part of its conception.

**Maarten Asscher** - But why are you calling it a book? What is the advantage?

**Henry Volans** - The advantage of calling it a book is that apps are associated in people's minds with 99 cents or 59p. But also that it is a book. In Theodor Gray's words, what marks it out is that it's a real honest to goodness book. That's how he describes it and that's central to his vision and what he works with us to drive it towards. Because there's competition. There are other cheaper apps that cover planets, stars... So it's a point of differentiation as well and from the point of view of quality non-fiction quite an important one I think.

**Marcus Chown** - You can read it from beginning to end, or you can dip in and out and there was an intention for that to happen.

**Henry Volans** - And actually the final thing to say is that, again like the poetry project, we are going to make, in a rather wonderful twist, we're going to make a real print book out of the app, out of the iPad app version. And so, fingers crossed, that will be released later this year as a coffee-table, illustrated book, using Marcus's text but a selection, not all the images.

**Marcus Chown** - It happened the opposite way round with *The Elements*. The book came out first, then the app, but they found that many people didn't have iPads but they saw the publicity and the buzz on the internet and they bought the book, so the two things helped the sales of each other.

**Maarten Asscher** - We will certainly have more discussion later, but perhaps two more brief questions. Paul.

**Paul Rutten** - Well just a very brief kind of remark. I was asked to do a column about radio a week ago and I concluded that radio extended beyond the medium itself. So that radio is not connected to something we know as radio, it's more a format, a way of presenting information. What you do with a book, calling something that could be called an app a book, is you promote it into a new form, which escapes the paper format. So the question is: what does that imply in terms of the future of the industry and who is going to produce what kind of things? Will there be a connection between what we call the publishing world and this new format, the book, or will all kinds of companies and people start producing books coming from different angles in whatever industry. Maybe it's more a question for the discussion later.

**Maarten Asscher** - We will continue on that, certainly. Chad Post?

**Chad Post** - I just have one question, because you talk about the restriction of how many words you could use in each section. As a science writer did you feel you were aiming at a different audience by doing this than you would have if you'd just written a straight book about the solar system? And if so, in what way?

**Marcus Chown** - Well, I would never have written a book about the solar system, but I really did try to write differently. There are a million astronomy books and they are all written in the same dull style. Factually. You know: Jupiter is eighty-eight thousand miles across, or whatever. So I really tried to write in the way that I would normally write and try to do something different. But I don't really ever think about an audience; I kind of write to entertain me. And so that I can get my head around things.

**Maarten Asscher** - Good. Thanks again Marcus. We are already on the brink of the phenomenon of enhancement, which is a good moment to switch over to Peter Collingridge. Peter.

**Peter Collingridge** - I'm here not just to talk about enhancement. Whilst I've cofounded a business that's called Enhanced Editions, I've been in publishing for thirteen years now. I began my career as an editor at Canongate Books, or actually not as an editor, as a dog's body at Canongate Books, and like I was saying earlier, I got into digital through becoming involved in the website and entering metadata into a catalogue because they didn't have any sort of digital catalogue at all. I started editing the Canongate website, where I began to realize that I could connect with a huge number of readers, or a modest number of very passionate readers who were extremely interested in the books that we were publishing at Canongate at the time that I got there. This was in 1999-2000. I became really surprised and evangelical about what this meant for publishing. Not just in terms of a communication channel but as a direct sales channel. Most of my experience has been in literary fiction and trade fiction rather than non-fiction, but I think a lot of the learnings apply to that as well. From that point on I became really clear that the future of publishing was not threatened by technology but that actually it was bound up in its successful embrace of technology. This is something I've spent the last thirteen years evangelizing about, but it's only in the last two years that everyone's really begun to see that these opportunities are there. Where we're going to in publishing is possibly bigger than where we've come from in terms of the audience that

we can reach and the kind of products we can create, and certainly the change that we're going to go through.

As a marketer, the most powerful thing about this is that for me publishing is about marketing. It's about the successful matchmaking of reader to writer and it's this activity that I think is going to define the success of publishers in the twenty-first century. Publishing has traditionally been about not reaching readers but convincing bookshops to stock books. It's been about getting books into bookshops, and bookshops having to get readers to get them out of the bookshop. I think that's probably what's going to change dramatically. So in the last thirteen years really what I've done is... I have quite a short attention span, I get bored quite quickly and I like making new things, but I also hate failure and I've had a lot of failures as well as a lot of successes in this time, and so what I've become very interested in is commercially-driven, reader-focused innovation and what can happen with that.

There's all sorts of different things that I've done, from running e-commerce websites for Canongate, digitalizing *Granta* magazine's entire archive and building them an e-commerce website, to viral marketing, making pop promos for books in the early noughties. I produced a social reading community, a global book group for Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, which was a complete and utter disaster, but it effectively tried to bring readers all around the world together with an eight-hundred-page feminist tract without any structure whatsoever. I think the idea for that was really interesting, but the project was probably wrong. I've looked at customization. We were talking earlier about printing out your own flowers on a DNA printer. About five years ago I spent six or eight months for a large publisher researching the idea of using print-on-demand to allow people to customize their own books and to print them out. We did a full feasibility study and software prototype for this and showed that it had a particular impact in the children's book market and in the classics-out-of-copyright market. The business case was strong but the publishing house, even though there was about a two million pound revenue line for it year on year, didn't take it forward, which is of course their prerogative.

I think what's quite interesting from my perspective of trying to drive innovation and doing it with publishers is to have seen the resistance to that innovation within publishing. There's quite a lot of a mindset, or there has been a mindset, which I think everybody who's talking here today is showing is no longer the case, that if it's not book-shaped it's not publishing. I

think really one of the things that we're seeing is that it doesn't have to be book-shaped to be publishing. An app about the solar system can be a book, and things that come out electronically as book-shaped may not necessarily be what consumers want. Certainly that was the history of the founding of Enhanced Editions, the company that I set up in 2009 with two of my friends. This was when Steve Jobs was saying that it doesn't matter how good the device is, people don't want it. Apple was saying that they were not going to produce the iPad, which they then went out and produced. At that time the Kindle was the dominant e-book device, then there was the Sony reader, and for me, having spent a long time trying to innovate in books, these were really boring devices. They were just facsimiles of the book, things that I didn't find showed that kind of Buck Rogers vision of what the future of the book should look like. So with my cofounders we set out to combine our enthusiasm for the future of the book with our enthusiasm for the iPhone and the App Store, which was at the time the most exciting thing hitting technology and software development, so we said: how do we put together the book with this really exciting new platform?

So we produced a platform to create enhanced e-books, and luckily enough we called it Enhanced Editions, which was the last name on our list and was actually quite a good one to call it. We effectively produced apps of e-books, combined them together with the audio book and with video and with updatable news feeds. The first title we produced was for Nick Cave, and in his case he'd also composed and performed a soundtrack for the book. So you had this synchronized sonic and reading and video experience. Which was a real blast. I think we took a real risk in doing this in terms of moving from our position as being a consultant to publishers to spending a lot of money, almost out of frustration that publishers themselves weren't taking the opportunities of the App Store, and becoming a digital publisher in many ways ourselves.

In the UK book sales have declined very rapidly because retailers have used price promotion to gain market share. We foresaw that the same thing was going to happen with e-books, that you would start getting really aggressive discounting in e-books, and we wanted to prove that books are actually a high-value object, that you can create value back into the book that readers will consider worth paying for. Our first app was priced expensively, at £14.99, which was at the time thirty times more than the average price of books in the App Store, but we knew that we wanted to make it good, we wanted to make something for the user that the user would delight in, and we also wanted to track stuff. All of my background in marketing shows

that whilst it's not always good news, the ability of the web to track and capture insight about what your users are doing, well, you don't get that from newspaper articles, you don't get it from posters in the underground, you don't get it from TV adverts. There's no corollary between the activities that you're doing in the way there is with the web. This is an incredibly exciting thing for publishers to grasp, I think.

So for me this shift from publishing being a business-to-business industry to being a business-to-consumer industry is the most important thing to address at the moment. It's not the great shift to digital; digital is just one part of it. And for me digital affords these great opportunities to influence readers as never before. Traditionally all publishers have been able to do is to try to get books into people's hands, but now, through digital channels and capturing data, not only in the marketing activity but in the devices themselves, you can look at what we call the entire reading cycle. So it's everything from creating intent, and that's probably a publicity and marketing activity in the first place, to discovery. How do you actually serve that intent? If people put a term into a Google search, how do you get them to your website and then influence them when they come to your website? How do you give them the information they want to have and join up all of your activities to make them actually go and purchase either from you or from another customer? You can then track what they're doing when they're reading. Do they like the book? I mean for example we know that people who read *The Death of Bunny Munro* by Nick Cave tend to do it between one o'clock and two o'clock in the morning for an average of I think thirty-four minutes. People who read Barak Obama's *Dreams From My Father* tend to do it for two hours at lunchtime. You can draw your own inferences from that. We also know that people who read Barak Obama's *Dreams From My Father* read it the whole way through, but people who read his more sort of political manifesto, *The Audacity of Hope*, tend to read chapter one and the last chapter, and skip all the stuff in the middle.

So as well as reading I think there are opportunities to influence the word of mouth that's been talked about. How people discuss and share and review and recommend books. As we all know, books catch fire from word of mouth rather than through paid-for marketing activity and there's a huge number of opportunities for publishers to get involved in this kind of activity, whether it's centralized or not. I think that increasingly the web is happening in a decentralized manner, but through the number of channels that publishers have got I think it's absolutely imperative that they try to put themselves at the centre somehow of the activity

that's taking place, even if they're not able to aggregate everything in one place. And I think this decision as to where publishers fit within the reading cycle, within the publishing landscape in 2011 is probably the biggest strategic question, from my perspective. In this world of new opportunity, are you going to get really involved, right up next to your consumers, and try to influence what they do? Or are you going to continue to cede power to a very small bunch of incredibly aggressive new entrants into the market in the form of Google and Amazon and Apple? Where are you going to fit in with that? Because we're already seeing the incredible power of these companies and their negotiating influence over publishers on price.

So I think there's a lot of reasons to be incredibly threatened by the digital book, from our perspective. I was in Moscow in December and I think that Russian publishers are quite fortunate in some respects, because they are just beginning to see what's happening with digital. I don't have the benefit of knowing exactly where you are on the time-line of digital but you are able to see that what's happened in the US – and the UK has generally seemed to be eighteen months behind what's happening in the US, with mainland Europe maybe eighteen months behind that – there is a certain amount of predictability. We've talked about the foreseeable future; I think it's inevitable. Random House has just announced eight hundred percent growth of digital in 2010 in the UK; it was four hundred percent the year before that. We've got forecasts of, as Sara said brilliantly, the majority of books being sold electronically in the next four or five years. There's a huge amount of opportunity for publishers to get involved in this stuff and I think it's not just about creating innovative products, though that's one big part of it, but becoming consumer-facing is absolutely radical.

So I'm going to finish by just giving out a quote that I quite like. We've talked a fair bit about serendipity and discovery. I think discovery is going to become the key question of the digital selling landscape, but the idea of serendipity is one that I think is bogus. There's a great quotation, I can't quite remember who it's by, I'm sure Richard's going to know, but it's a golf quotation. It goes: golf is a game of luck, I just find that the harder I practice the luckier I get. I think there's a lot to be said about how you can use digital to influence serendipity. Thank you.

**Maarten Asscher** - Thank you very much, Peter. Any questions for Peter. Chad Post.

**Chad Post** - I have a longish question for you. One that might put you on the spot, too. I agree about the customer-focusing thing; we do that at Open Letter, we're very close to our customers, all that stuff I'm not questioning, but you start with the idea that your readers become your creators and you focus on your readers first, as in your quote earlier from Seth Godin, and then combine that with the idea where you have these apps that you can track people's reading responses, what they're reading, what they're not reading, what works and what doesn't work at such an integral level. How do you prevent this from becoming just a Hollywood focus group and actually have publishing that is doing things that are not specifically always catering to what is popular?

**Peter Collingridge** - Great question. I think first of all actually the Seth Godin quote is not about collaborative reading or collaborative writing exactly, it's about serving their needs.

**Chad Post** - That's what I mean.

**Peter Collingridge** - And sort of realizing that people who are obsessive about triathlon congregate in certain areas and want products about it, but they don't necessarily want to write a book about it. I think the simple answer is: you do what publishers do best, which is they bring their editorial insight and their curatorial gut feeling to things, but it happens because of an understanding that you can't just make it and send it out there anymore, you've got to get much more involved with your community.

**Chad Post** - That's wonderful.

**Richard Nash** - I'd like to throw in something on that topic, which is that I think any given community recognizes that it thrives on challenge, as well as on being served up red meat, and that if its leadership, for want of a better term, does nothing but pander, the community withers. So I would use that as a kind of anchoring point for seeking to identify a balance between slavish responsiveness to the reader and challenging the reader to engage more dynamically and imaginatively with the material.

**Chad Post** - Can I ask a couple of follow-up questions? Have you had enhanced editions that are particularly not successful versus successful? And Richard, that makes total sense for all of us, but you get into a corporate atmosphere that way and there's a slippery slope, there's a

difference between us and other things in some sense. Just to add to your point, because I think you're right.

**Peter Collingridge** - Yes, definitely we've had some that are more successful than others, and it's a source of insight and frustration to me.

**Chad Post** - Which ones?

**Peter Collingridge** - Well we're contractually stopped from releasing... I mean, Barak Obama didn't do great, but it didn't have any audio content in there, for example. We couldn't clear the rights on the audio book in there. There's certain laws that stop an incumbent president from signing any new contracts, commercial contracts, so we couldn't do anything with that. Also the audio book was abridged, and you can't synchronize an abridged audio book to a full text. We've had cases where a publisher has paid us a huge amount of money, or a considerable amount of money, to produce an app, purely to tick a box in their contract with their author. Because we've had agents, without us knowing, write us into their contracts, saying if you're going to publish this title you have to do an app with Enhanced Editions, us being effectively a service-provider to that publisher, and then the publisher dropping the ball on marketing it and saying: we've run out of time; we've got a great app but we're not going to do anything with it. I think it's this marketing component which is really weak at a lot of publishing houses. There's a belief that a marketing campaign starts and finishes with a press release to the bookseller. It's got to change, because all of the traditional outlets for discovery are dying within publishing. Newspaper literary pages are being slashed or completely made redundant. Bookshops are dying; footfall's going down. We're going to leave it so that all of discovery's going to be dominated by what's on the Amazon and the Apple iTunes homepage. I think that's where they need to get involved.

**Richard Nash** - I don't think I need to respond so much as just recognize in your admonition that any technology, any tool can be used for good and for evil.

**Maarten Asscher** - Ramy and then Ed, please.

**Ramy Habeeb** - I'll save my question for the discussion, because it could be used for evil...

**Edward Nawotka** - Chad alluded to it but I have essentially two questions. One is I wanted to hear a little bit more about what the failure was with the Doris Lessing experiment.

Because there appears to be a ready-made community there, and there's all this talk about community, community, community, about catering to them. Was it something that they just didn't want or didn't care to participate in? At the same time, and maybe Henry can address this as well, there's the question of backlists. You're talking about essentially frontlist titles that are begin worked on with contemporary materials or reinventing something new. Publishers generate a lot of income from their backlists and this is a big question going forward. So what's going to happen with backlists? Are there the same digital marketing discovery opportunities that you alluded to at the very end of your talk for backlists and what's your point of view on that?

**Peter Collingridge** - I think backlist is hugely exciting actually, but looked at from a non-linear perspective. So for example we've signed a deal with BBC Worldwide, or formerly BBC Worldwide, with AudioGO, which is their audio book archive, and we're looking at ways that we can curate new paths through the BBC's audio archive, working out for example an audio book about love that goes from Auden to the Beatles to the Summer of Love to wherever it's going to go. I think creatively, publishing is obsessed with the new. When you look at the amount of value that sits on the backlist it's absolutely incredible. I think what's missing is the space to curate that.

**Maarten Asscher** - Well the poetry example goes to show that there is a distinctive potential in high-quality backlist titles as well.

**Henry Volans** - See. It's quickly addressed. The thing with the poetry project is that actually I would say it's similar to *The Solar System*, in that we sort of thought: if we were starting from scratch, how would we conceive that poem to get the best use of the iPad, and that's what we did for *The Solar System*, because I found it the most rewarding. I think we'll learn masses by how we deal with the next project. Obviously you are already more restricted. I think I said in a remark on an earlier point that one of the exciting things from *The Solar System* is that you could conceive the rights in the right way from the start, so that we'd have world rights in other languages. There are no barriers; I wasn't spending time on that. The poetry project is a bit different and some of the things there are bringing in existing recordings. Can we get archival recordings? On backlist, Faber obviously, in twentieth-century poetry and drama, has peerless backlists. That brings with it a kind of burden. We're thinking about that a lot but

getting it right isn't easy and I think that's a medium-term project with the next Touch Press partnership for the area, a sort of flag-bearer.

**Peter Collingridge** - Can I just jump in on that? Before we talk about *The Golden Notebook*, the backlist thing. We produced the digital work for Andrew Wylie's Odyssey Editions last year, which is where the Wylie agency went direct and created e-books of everything from *Lolita* to Philip Roth and Martin Amis. And one of the exiting things from that was not just creating the digital editions but looking at the digital marketing opportunities. So everything from search engine optimization, wanting to come up top on a search for any of those terms, but looking at how you integrate extracts and all of the stuff we talked about in terms of metadata for those titles and I think that's a project more than any other that has made use of my thirteen years in the business. One of the things I talked about at Tools of Change was how when you like a page on Facebook you don't just get a normal link but you get a dedicated Facebook-sized thumbnail of the cover with an extract and the author information, which is a slightly obsessive level of detail, but it's really important in this day and age.

**Edward Nawotka** - You're absolutely right, sure, you have to pick your images.

**Maarten Asscher** - We will certainly pick up this subject further in our discussion after tea, especially the notion of the burden of a backlist and the responsibility that goes with a backlist, which will bring us in a way to the essence of book publishing and how that relates to the notion of multimedia enhanced productions. So thank you, Peter, for causing all this. Now I would like for the fourth presentation to give the microphone to Richard Nash.

**Richard Nash** - Hi everyone. I usually don't write out my text, and I haven't written out all my text, but I've been awake for forty-six of the last fifty hours and so around hour thirty-six or thirty-eight I thought it might be smart to write it down, especially because what I want to give is actually just one idea. I want to argue it kind of aggressively. It's an idea that doesn't even start until after the 'What is next?' that we've talked about thus far. It's an idea that doesn't begin for a couple of years. But it's an idea that we see the glimmers of already in other areas of media, especially music and journalism, which is that – notwithstanding our discussion of £14 and £10 and \$17 price points for apps and e-books – for most digital content on most of the planet for most of the rest of human existence, the price of digital content is going to be zero. Zero, zero, zero. There's a basic fundamental rule of economics, which is that when the marginal cost of reproduction of a thing is zero, its price falls to zero. Not the

fixed cost. It's a commonplace in publishing recently, when we confront pricing pressure from either customers or retailers that says 'cheaper, cheaper, cheaper', that we say 'we can't do it that cheap, our costs don't let us do it that cheap'. We fall into the trap of thinking that our costs determine what the price of a thing is, and until we can get rid of capitalism that's just not true. The price of something is set by its demand curve and it's set by what people are willing to sell something for, and people undercut. I know they can't undercut in certain ways, I know you can't discount, but you can give something away.

Now in the United States over the last nineteen years the number of books published has increased fortyfold, from 25,000 a year in 1990 to a million last year. And that's new books. That excludes the fact that pretty much every book ever published, subject to caveats around what Google can do and copyright law, is going to come back into print. So there will be hundreds of millions of books. We are entering the age of abundance, and as the internet media theorist Clay Shirky points out, human beings don't do well with abundance. We know how to handle scarcity: we ration food, we impose zoning legislation around commercial development, we create copyright laws and patent laws to encourage scarce innovation. We don't know how to do well with abundance. We grow fat, we develop anorexia. We have too much food, so we get skinny. Suicidally skinny. Our society, human beings are structured to manage scarcity because that's what we've had to deal with our entire existence. And what we've started doing over the last decade is we've reached an age of abundance. We see it on YouTube, we see it in music. Part of what has happened in music isn't just that music can be downloaded for free, it's that music can be created for free. Almost all the innovation that has occurred in media in the last 150 years has been supply-side innovation, rather than demand-side innovation. Adobe PageMaker, supply-chain management, point-of-sale data, improvements in educational, social and intellectual capital. Our capacity to create images, music, words, has increased by many, many, many, many, many orders of magnitude more than our capacity to consume it.

So we're facing a situation where the price of content is going to zero, and I'm not just talking about self-publishing, with bad writers churning out lots of books. Bad writers certainly are churning out lots of books; bad writers have always churned out lots of books. If we go back to any of the list of shortlisted or awarded books in the 1950s, we're going to find an awful lot of shitty books that in 1955 our society thought were remarkable. We're also however facing an enormous creation in content for commercial purposes, purposes that do not seek

monetization through the selling of a unit of that content, by which I mean: do you buy a parenting book from Simon & Schuster or from Johnson & Johnson? Johnson & Johnson bought babycenter.org, one of America's leading parenting sites, three years ago, because they were spending eight million dollars a year advertising on it. They just realized: why don't we just buy it? Johnson & Johnson's capacity to deliver trusted advice to mothers on diaper rash exceeds Simon & Schuster's by many, many, many, many orders of magnitude, and they are not selling their books, they're giving it away. Because publishing, to quote Peter, is marketing. Publishing is marketing for non-publishers.

So we're facing a level of competition for the delivery of information and entertainment that vastly exceeds any possible creation of artificial scarcity. Because that's what we've done, we've created artificial scarcity. It's what we're doing right now with the iPad; it's what Apple have given us for a year or two, they're giving us artificial scarcity. People are going to try out things for their new gadget. And there will be some spectacular successes. As you pointed out it's like putting it on the colour red. It's not even putting it on the colour red, it's putting it on the number seven. In terms of the number of apps that have that level of success, it's a testament to their talent but I can't argue that it's a business model for an entire industry when it faces such a level of competition from free content.

So what do we do? The thrilling thing is that in a certain sense all you have to do is a lot of the things we talked about this morning and this afternoon, because a lot of the things that we're talking about in terms of marketing don't involve creating copies of something and having to sell copies. We talked about databases that need to be continually updated, that need to be engaged with, and interrogated in ongoing ways, that are fundamentally unhackable because it would be like the Borgesian map of the world that is the size of the world. You have to hack the entire database and then you've to maintain the entire database. The odds are that the guys who created the database can do that a lot more cost-effectively than any pirate ever could. You create unhackable experiences. One of the interesting things with Faber, that they're doing that doesn't map directly onto digital publishing but does map onto community building, is Faber Academy. The fact that, certainly in the United States, seven percent of the adult population engaged in creative writing last year – that's eighteen million people. Which is, you know, better than watching television. Better than captioning LOL cats. Yes, they produce a lot of crap, but watching television is even crappier in terms of a net addition to our society. So the opportunity to engage with people's desire to create is another area in which

you take the power of being associated with compelling content and monetize it not by creating artificial scarcity for that content – you can only buy the book from me through copyright – but rather by selling education against it, by using limited editions, highly artisanal, expensive, individualized, physical artefacts, much like the vinyl resurgence in the music business.

You have an opportunity to monetize the entire editorial apparatus that surrounds a defined text, which is also unhackable in the same way as a database is. So while *The Golden Notebook* I know was entirely a failure, it was a failure of community management, though, of having the right text with the right annotators being linked to the right people. So it's basically a publishing failure. We know how to address publishing failures. You find the right book for the right audience with the right people, just like we've always done in publishing. And the annotation apparatus becomes that which is unhackable, that which is valuable, that which you can't get anywhere else, a sense of belongingness.

The excitement, Peter, that you described just in working for Canongate, on the Canongate enterprise, is a sign of the kind of power of belongingness that publishers can offer people, it extracted a significant number of hours at below market rate of Peter's time. Because Canongate was sexy. One of the best things ever said about the publishing company I used to run, Soft Skull Press, was in the comments section of a *Guardian* newspaper blog post in 2004, where the blogger was asking: 'what books got you laid?' And one of the commenters said: 'anything published by Soft Skull.' Now that's branding. And it also suggests the community model that may be potentially the most powerful. Easily the most successful social reading network in the United States right now is a company called Good Reads. It's got flaws, but it's certainly the most successful. It's run by a guy who was the lead developer at a dating website. The most successful bookseller in New York right now is a little 120-square-metre bookstore in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, a sort of transitionally gentrifying neighbourhood, and their most successful two features are the dating bulletin board on a column inside the store and their singles events. Because books take ten to fifteen hours of the inside of your head and they tell you a lot about who you are as a person, so they become a proxy for your identity, and a much more effective proxy than many of the questions that get tossed up on match.com or OkCupid, at least for a certain subset of the country. So the power to own the relationships amongst readers, between writers and readers, and our ability to do that in ways that transcend whether or not they buy a book, is I think the source of our power

five and ten years down the road, as we face the tremendous glut of long-form-narrative content. I ended up not using my notes.

**Maarten Asscher** - Bravo. Thank you very much, Richard. I don't know what kind of presentations you do when you're awake, but I very much enjoyed this one. I suggest we go in to tea right away, saving our questions and points for the discussion in twenty-five minutes from now. Thanks.

## Friday 2 - 3.30 pm

### Discussion

**Maarten Asscher** - Welcome back. I'd like to start our discussion with Henry, who mentioned that in this new phase of the development of the publishing profession and the publishing market, text is no longer king. In the way people look at apps, the content, as he put it, sits a bit back. It is not the primary feature by which an app is judged. On the other hand, for authors, at least authors as we know them, text is absolutely king and content sits absolutely in the front row. So Henry, when you come to develop your programme further, how do you find the right authors for your content, the content that you need, and will these authors necessarily have to have different abilities? Will they be differently programmed than authors as we knew them in the olden days?

**Henry Volans** - A lot of that is a publishers' role to solve, or help solve, and I think a lot of it comes down to a matter of packaging and presentation and finding a way to bring the product to a user in such a way that it allows people to experience the content, the text. In the light of Richard's Armageddon, some of these seem sub-categories, but what I'm learning very clearly in the case of apps with some of our other projects, is that it's absolutely clear you won't be thanked, or your content valued, in proportion to how many books' worth of material goes in. In the app we did for *QI*, there are four backlist books. You sure can't price that as you would one book times four. For the Malcolm Tucker app there was one book's worth. That's actually not what people noticed or thanked us for including. The experimental feature we had there of telling a story through local notifications with fabricated voicemails – we got the cast to record that anew and we got the team of five scriptwriters to write that afresh – that's what people loved, and so in the end we're now getting beaten around the head by the reviewers for it stopping too soon, which is a good problem to have, because it's shown that the form worked. It's quite innovative really, I think, telling a story through local notifications on an iPhone. But there's no extra bonus. It didn't help in reaching that £3.99 price point, having a book's worth.

**Maarten Asscher** - But back to authorship if I may. For example a poetry app. You can't just ring a professor of poetry who is the most knowledgeable about a certain poem. You have to have an author who can lift the thousands of dimensions of that particular poem to a level of

digital presentation. How do you find these people? How do you educate them? Will there be specialized agents?

**Henry Volans** - Will there be agents?

**Martien de Vletter** - But I'm wondering, what is an author in that case? Who is the author, indeed? With your app, as you explained to us, it's not only Marcus Chown but many people involved, and I think all of them are more-or-less an author.

**Peter Collingridge** - Isn't the question: who owns the copyright? And who gets...

**Jos de Mul** - It's more like movie production.

**Peter Collingridge** - I mean, who owns the IP?

**Martien de Vletter** - Of course in the end that is the question, but I'm actually thinking it's also... Of the content, as you say, who is the author?

**Maarten Asscher** - I'm looking for the intellectual authorship and the question of whether an old-fashioned author is programmed differently from the person sitting on my left side.

**Henry Volans** - It's a hard question. I strongly believe that the basic forms of writing don't change easily and I frustrated a small conference of English Literature academics who I think wanted me to come along and tell them that there'd be this new form of writing called 'digital fiction'. I didn't think there was. I didn't see why the form would lead to a change. I got some very strong questioning and I think I really came away feeling I hadn't said what they wanted me to say. So it's very deliberate that my experiments have been with Marcus, where I think it can suit the form, and with a team of comedy scriptwriters who're used to writing scripts, so that scripting some voicemails makes sense. It's no accident that I haven't done any projects around fiction, because I don't know how to improve it and the key thing about the poetry project is that it puts the poem at the heart and the innovation is around other things, such as how perspectives on it come along and perhaps how you navigate through a poem. But I think there are these big areas that so far are immovable and I think it would be really wrong to say in a glib way that digital changes the artistic drive. I think it may come, but I haven't really seen signs of it yet. There are new forms, certainly expressing things crisply. A crisply

expressed Facebook status update is a new form; 140 characters well used is a new form, but I think that's just additional.

**Maarten Asscher** - Jos de Mul made some comments on this point in his presentation. Perhaps he would like to elaborate.

**Jos de Mul** - Well it might be interesting to look at movies, to compare the situation, for several reasons I think, and it's also interesting to look at who's the author of a movie. There's been a whole discussion in film theory about this question. The interesting thing, or one of the interesting things here is that some directors, for example, have their own style. We talk about the Hitchcock kind of movie etcetera, so that's also an interesting model artistically. This morning I said we're still looking for the holy grail in a certain sense. It was also very interesting with movies. When they started they were a kind of recording of theatre, just linear recording. The big thing was montage. The moment of montage was the birth of a new kind of art form. I think we are still looking in this domain. Well, games are one answer to what to do with digital media, but I think there are more. Because the computer is a universal machine, you can virtually do anything with it. We are looking for new models here. Also for the book. You have a kind of transition from the theatre to the movie and there's something similar from the book to the digitally enhanced book, which will be called differently than the words we use now, but we're still looking for that.

**Richard Nash** - Even in the area of games you now have two rather distinct incarnations, the highly graphical 3D studio-driven hundred-million-dollar production, typically sold by unit and relatively expensive, which is in the throes of getting its ass kicked by the text-only, entirely social games driven by companies like Zynga, Mafia Wars and FarmVille, which are free to play and make their money by selling virtual goods. Those are two radically different business models, with radically different production values and with people who used to have a job called illustrator – like a friend of mine five years ago, who now has a job called creative director of a video game. So people with different appetites for risk, different appetites for change, with different random occurrences in terms of what opportunities present themselves professionally, are going to respond on a fairly ad hoc basis at the moment I think.

**Peter Collingridge** - There was an experiment, it was probably two or three years ago now, by Penguin in the UK. It was called *We Tell Stories* and I think it's still online at [wetellstories.co.uk](http://wetellstories.co.uk). They commissioned five of their mid- to better-known authors to produce

writing for the digital age. So for example there were five instalments, or six, I can't remember, the first was told in Google Maps, so you had locations on a map with a pop-up bubble of text and then you followed the text through King's Cross in London and the whole series of narratives actually had a theme running through it that took place in the offline world as well. Another one, I think it was by Mohsin Hamid, did a choose-your-own-adventure type thing where you start here, you turn left here, choice A, B or C. Another one was told in Twitter. And they were pretty hit-and-miss. It got a lot of attention for Penguin, and I think the Twitter one was quite popular because it took place in real time, but to some people they felt like affectations or narrative being shoe-horned in. It was conceptual writing and I think the concept was probably more successful than the end product, but it was still a landmark piece of digital publishing. There have been some really interesting things. I was at Digital Book World last week and met up with a guy who's just written a book about the best iPad apps, ironically.

**Maarten Asscher** - A book about the best iPad apps?

**Peter Collingridge** - Yes, it's like a directory, but not just book apps. In there there's a really nice app that is effectively a piece of video looking up at clouds, so your iPad is looking up at the clouds and falling on the screen of the iPad are lots of raindrops, and what happens is you rub your fingers over the screen and it tells a story. The user experience and the user interface are great but the story is a little bit weak. But it works. I think what's interesting is how the right publisher brings these two things together. It's the ability to see who can make the most of this.

**Maarten Asscher** - Ramy, please.

**Ramy Habeeb** - Yes, this is for Richard and Henry. Don't you think that a time is going to come very soon when authors are going to approach you and say: 'I have an idea for a book and it's only going to work on the iPad or the iPhone or the Android or whatever it is, because it requires the technology or it requires the ability to link and jump about?' So my question is twofold. Part one is: do you see that happening, and if you do, will you accept them? So instead of you going out and looking for the author you'll accept this author approaching you, be it via an agent or not. And part two is: what value-added service can you offer that author in that situation if they have the programming skills themselves? Assuming they're coming as

a full package, with the programming skills, with the design skills, their own team so to speak, and they're just looking for an advance for it.

**Henry Volans** - It is happening already, I think that a key criteria is always: is that author trying to use this as an opportunity to solve an existing problem or frustration? Such as: I've always wanted to write, say, 15,000-word extended pieces. Because in that case the iPad or whatever is very unlikely to solve the commercial issue. If it's: I have an inherent understanding of this form, how it works, what it can do, and an inkling that some people are interested in buying that. Or, well, put that back a sec. There's a business model. The thing with *We Tell Stories* was that there was no business model, by Penguin's own admission. That's what allowed it to happen, but the fact there was no business model was the reason that all the wonderful coverage and enthusiasm wasn't followed through. So basically, if it's conceptually right and there's a business model I'd jump at the chance. In terms of what a publisher can add, I think the skills in the world that Richard depicts, the skills of getting a business model from writing in this age, more than reward you. That's pretty valuable. Publishers can do that.

**Maarten Asscher** - Richard?

**Richard Nash** - I certainly get approached like that all the time and I've said no every single time. Now my reasons for doing that have varied in their emphasis, varied in their order, but they've all contained A: I was unpersuaded that they had the talent to pull it off; B: I was unpersuaded that the resources that would be required to marshal it would be commensurate with its likelihood of success. I was a theatre director for almost a decade before I worked in publishing, so I'm familiar with what it takes to assemble a team of variously talented people and mesh together a multi-valent story. My instinct as a publisher is that there are going to be publishers out there who're going to specialize in betting on horses. I prefer to specialize in owning a racetrack. And that's not a way to own a racetrack. What I'm offering would be my dumb money, and I don't have dumb money.

**Peter Collingridge** - The risks go down when... I mean, we get approached the whole time. On my way here I got a voicemail from an author who said: 'Guess what you've been waiting for all your life.'

**Maarten Asscher** - You're the lucky guy! I'm calling you!

**Richard Nash** - I'm gonna make you rich, Peter Collingridge.

**Peter Collingridge** - And it's not the first time that's happened. And we also get agents coming to us and asking us to do the same thing, and I think one thing that's different for us is that we took a very different attitude to what Henry's done, in that we invested in a platform, so by that I mean we invested in technology that scales, so we can produce multiple enhanced editions, we can produce 1,000 a day if we want to. So the risk for us goes down and we've already far and away earned back the costs of investment into our platforms, so the marginal risk is just how long it takes us to produce it.

**Richard Nash** - You've built a racetrack.

**Peter Collingridge** - We've built a racetrack, yes. Although we occasionally invest in horses as well, if we think they're fast ones.

**Maarten Asscher** - I'd like to ask the horse next to me the question whether you would please comment on this authorship discussion out of your own experience, and perhaps you can also go into the question of what the writing of your solar system app means to you in your CV, in your list of publications as an author. In view of the lack of critical response to such a work, how does that affect the build-up of your career as an author and as a scientist?

**Marcus Chown** - Can you remind me of those... What was the first question?

**Maarten Asscher** - You should be outsourcing your memory. That's very clear. How is it for you as an author?

**Marcus Chown** - Well, I'm a journalist and a writer so I'm used to writing short things for magazines and newspapers, and I'm just interested in writing for many outlets. So I don't see this as very different from what I normally do. I've written news pieces for magazines and newspapers and it's simply like writing sixteen or seventeen news stories a week, so I've done that before. I'm interested in exploring new avenues. As I said, I've done things like stand-up comedy in the last year, so I'm just interested in doing interesting things. As for why I did it: because it was something new, because it was something different, because it was exciting, but also I thought that primarily I'm an author and that it would basically improve my chances of selling books, particularly in markets like America, where I'm not very well read. It

certainly has got my name around and I do hope that it will sell more books for Faber. What was the last question?

**Maarten Asscher** - No, no this is fine. That's the promotional value of this app publication in your career, which doesn't take away anything from your published books but rather adds to it.

**Marcus Chown** - Yes, absolutely. And you said: what about the lack of critical reaction? Well I think there will be. I think that initially, when this app, or this interactive book, has only been out a month, the first thing that people see is its visual look and that's what they react to, but one of the things I really, really didn't want to do was write captions to images, so there is a limit beyond which I wouldn't go as an author, and fortunately both Touch Press and Faber were very, very keen that this was story-led and that it was an interactive *book*.

**Richard Nash** - I sort of feel in general that writers are looking at a much more expansive definition of how they generate revenue. We've already seen in the United States, especially in the area of non-fiction, many categories in which writers make far more money speaking than they make on royalties, or make far more money teaching than they make on royalties. The academic book generates five hundred dollar in royalties and a 75,000 dollar annual increase in their salary. I joke that you could solve the university press publishing problem in the United States by simply giving the university press two percent of the increase in the salary of the author that's attributable to the publication of that book, since effectively they're running a tenure affirmation process on behalf of the academy. But poets make far more money, the average decent poet makes more money in a single reading at a university than they'll make in their lifetime on royalties for a book. Now when I say this, especially in the area of poets and fiction writers, there is immediate pushback from both writers and publishers, who have a vision of the fiction writer and the poet as this wilting flower best kept in an attic away from the pressures of social interaction. I don't get nearly as much pushback from non-fiction writers, who tend to be more typically engaged in arguing with, or engaging with, the themes and the substance about which they are writing. But it's finding that which is unhackable, uncopyable, and identifying that as the revenue stream and using the book as the way to maximize visibility and reputation. It's the different sense of the word 'platform': platform as a reputational package, that's what the US non-fiction agents call it.

**Marcus Chown** - Can I just say something. I didn't finish about the text. I think that I put as much effort into writing the text as I would anything else and I think that the interactive book, the app, hopefully will have legs and will survive a long time because of that. I think that, as I say, we're seeing the initial reaction to the visual look of it, but I'm hoping... Faber certainly is in the business of producing interesting books, interesting words, aren't you.

**Maarten Asscher** - But still there is a difference in status, in significance for your career as a science writer between this solar system project and writing an authoritative and successful popular science book about the same subject that is published in book form. Or isn't there?

**Marcus Chown** - Do you think this is worse, or better, or..

**Maarten Asscher** - I...

**Marcus Chown** - I just think it's different. It's exactly the same to me. I dealt with it in exactly the same way as I would a normal book. From my point of view, I thought: this is going to give me hugely more visibility and ultimately lead to selling more books. I enjoyed doing it and I really did things I'd not done before and we explored the possibilities of the device. It's not anything that I think that I'll be doing all the time. I hope to go back to writing books.

**Henry Volans** - I haven't read the rules for it yet, but I would like – okay, just to prove a point – I'd like to enter this for the Samuel Johnson Prize, the main non-fiction prize in our country. Entering things across that... To break down the bounds. As we all know, it's less important than it was, but newspapers are starting to review apps. If I was running the books pages in the papers I would deal with those things. I think it's a bit extraordinary that they are still focusing on things that are printed on paper.

**Maarten Asscher** - But instead of calling it a book, and it's fine by me that you call it a book, but someone else might call it an interactive documentary.

**Henry Volans** - I stand quite firmly by 'book'. I like 'book'. I think that's going to endure. There are lots of examples of prefixes and affixes dropping off as something becomes established. That's the point. These other things at the moment are just padding around it. It will stretch massively what's meant by that definition, but I think it makes sense.

**Maarten Asscher** - Will you also call your poetry project a book?

**Henry Volans** - Well it's a poem, so... No. That's different. Because I don't call a poem a book. I think on Richard's point, one of Faber's proudest things is that some of our poets actually make real money simply from selling poetry and without any funding of any kind, so we're a private company that makes money from poetry. One of our poets, Jo Shapcott, won the Costa Prize earlier this week, the main prize in the UK, the second year that a poem has won something, so okay, maybe it's a little bit utopian, but you back quality. She hadn't published a collection for a decade, but you sort of stay with something and back quality... I actually think Richard's bigger view about the drop to zero, I think that's true of utility, but I'm not yet sure it's true of quality things. Although, proving Richard's point a bit, she teaches creative writing courses for Faber Academy.

**Richard Nash** - Yes, the hassle with quality, to make one little metaphor, is that you're kind of in a situation where you're making Santa Clauses at Christmas and having to say: I do the best Santa Clauses. I've published poetry myself. At Soft Skull we published four books of poetry a year and we had a couple of successes, but the reality was that the net sale on each was 750 copies. But I know that I made those poets money by improving their overall status and increasing their chances of getting readings and the like.

**Maarten Asscher** - One brief comment by Marcus, please.

**Marcus Chown** - Can I just say that I wasn't simply the author. One of the fun things about being involved in this project is that I was involved in many, many aspects, and many of the images, many of the simulations were my suggestion. But also there were lots of other people who suggested things and it was a community effort, so I think calling me the author or calling someone else the image consultant is too narrow. It's more like what you were talking about: films. It's that kind of collaboration.

**Jeroen Sondervan** - I just wanted to ask Henry: who do you consider your competitors in creating these books, as you call them? I can imagine that other companies with different backgrounds will create the same kind of content, because it merges.

**Henry Volans** - Everyone, basically. It is interesting because apps, the febrile, interesting thing about apps is that they sit between everything. We publishers don't sit around beating

ourselves up that we haven't made a motion picture of something. We sometimes get a bit cross that we don't get the licensing rights as often as we'd like, but we don't expect ourselves to make movies or TV productions. I just draw a line, that I shared with our editorial team, with movies as the most expensive, games and TV at one end, books at the other, and we are still working out how far we go. In the case of something like *QI*, that's a major TV production, so who gets there first, us or the TV production company? One of the things in my job is trying to get there first, at the moment, just to see where that leads, but it could be them, it could be us. So I actually think, quite interestingly, that you have to look beyond publishers as your competition. And you certainly need to look beyond publishers as your partners, simply because a partnership to be valuable has a difference of skills and if you're just duplicating the same shape it's not valuable. But I think questions like who your competition is you have to be thinking of all the time.

**Maarten Asscher** - Angus.

**Angus Phillips** - Yes I just want to follow up on the issue of authorship, if value is really being driven out of the system, so that content is going to go to a value of zero over time. You talk to innovative publishers and they're very much in favour of an 80-20 rule. They're making their money out of twenty percent of what they're publishing and they're investing in these other projects, other new authors for example, with the proceeds of some bestsellers. What is the prospect for authors? Obviously the big names can go on the road and do what rock bands have done and make their money out of the merchandise, and they can sell printed books when they're doing readings, they can charge for doing events, those kinds of things, but what about the new authors? What should they be doing? Should they be approaching publishers? Should they be self-publishing in an attempt to break into the world on their own? Is it up to them now to make that push? Or if the money is going out of the system, will publishers be able to invest in those new authors?

**Maarten Asscher** - Well it seems to me to be a question to all of us here. So Peter, would you like to begin?

**Peter Collingridge** - I think that where you fit in this is a mindset thing, really. The notion of a publisher producing books, as I was saying, is increasingly abstract. If your readers read books, you produce books. If your readers use apps, you produce apps. If they watch films then you think about making films, and it's that mindset shift that I think publishers need to

get their heads round. In New York I was talking to a publisher called Dominique Raccach, who runs a house called Sourcebooks, and they produce a number of apps for their titles including baby-name books and university guides. And in-house they have information architects, they have user-experience people, they have people who effectively scope out the app structure, interface, user flow and then they outsource the development, but development is absolutely locked down at the point that they do that, and I think that's an incredibly smart thing for them to do. I don't know what Henry's reaction was or his experience was, but from my experience as a supplier to publishing houses, if you're building a big e-commerce website for publishers you find they don't know a lot about that stuff. They learn incredibly fast on the job, which has a high cost to them in that they're not necessarily learning from it every time. I think if you can bring those skills in house, particularly as publishing becomes increasingly digital, then that's going to become a massively important skill set. I think how publishers are resourced is a really big challenge. We were talking earlier about young people using Twitter versus old people. There's a tendency at a publisher's to have somebody come into an interview and say 'Oh I use Twitter and Facebook,' and they say 'Oh, well you're our new digital person'. And actually they don't even know how to set up a blog. It's very early stages but I think that horrible word again, 'platform agnosticism', is very important for publishers. You learn how to create things that delight customers in whatever medium it takes.

**Richard Nash** - The problem that you described is a problem that I explicitly addressed for my decade in conventional publishing. I ran an independent publisher, we published thirty-five books a year, almost all universally rejected by between five and fifty other publishers. Debuts, and authors who had done two or three books with corporate publishers which had not done well. We had enough successes there that it worked, so I'm sort of one of the twenty exhibits when you look for a publisher to accomplish the discovery of the unknown author and his or her connection to several thousand or more readers. The model that I'm describing, the kind of revenue stream that I'm describing, is more favourable to accomplishing that than the status quo ante. The status quo ante was absolutely fucking terrible. My margins were zero, or close to zero. Despite that level of branding that I described in the blog posts in the *Guardian*, you still had to pay Barnes and Noble 12,000 dollars to get 1,000 books for two weeks in the top hundred stores. In this particular model I've got a community of 3,000 writers who are evangelists for every member of the community. I've got people taking classes who would not be established enough to teach creative writing classes in MFA programmes in the United States. So as I've modelled it and I've got a lot more data to

collect, so I've got nothing but my words right now, but as I've modelled it, it's a dramatic improvement on the status quo ante, and it will make it easier to find new writing and connect it to readers who'll appreciate it.

**Maarten Asscher** - Thank you. Either of you two with a comment on where a prospective app author should go to? To an agent? To a publisher? To Touchstone? Enhanced Editions?

**Henry Volans** - Just in the sense of what they should bring in order to increase their attractiveness: a fan base, a number of Twitter followers is a very nice simple measure. Of course that raises the question: if they've already got a fan base, why do they need a publisher? I think the fan base is a very good starting point. With most authors, if you just reached to that base it wouldn't be enough, but if it provides visibility... For me just the experience of releasing apps, plural, all of them, shows that was the point of conversion. Twitter, and even the labour intensiveness of one-to-one is still actually rewarding when you see you can hand-sell individual apps. Someone says '£3.99, that's a bit much' and you say 'well it's got this' and they often buy it. That's actually quite rewarding. But I think just bring something of an audience. If you're completely in the dark, that's hard.

**Maarten Asscher** - Ramy and then Eppo.

**Ramy Habeeb** - He actually kind of answered my question, but I just wanted to ask: in your opinion what is the importance for a publisher to be first? Like the first to release an app like the astrology app, first to do whatever it is. How important is it for the publisher to be the first out the gate?

**Henry Volans** - I think at the moment very important and that it will be hard to do that for ever, but it's actually quite an entertaining challenge to meet, and it's not necessarily just about first, to me it's working out how you keep a sense of the differing value of content on the sort of stock market of Apple, Amazon and Google's agendas. There was a very good talk by a leading lawyer I went to, just saying that famously Apple's bigger than all global publishing varieties combined, but you can't influence them, they don't really mind about you, they do really mind about each other and you can work out ways to understand that and use that to your advantage. Use the benefit, the different benefits, of content in that way. So that's not necessarily about being first, it's just picking the right partner at the right time.

**Marcus Chown** - I think you've come up with a really brilliant idea there, an astrology app. Because thousands of times more people are interested in astrology than astronomy.

**Maarten Asscher** - Eppo, are you still online?

**Eppo van Nispen tot Sevenaer** - Yes I'm very much online and I'd like to make some points. Something Richard and Peter talked about, which happens with Nick Cave's great app, *The Death of Bunny Munro*, I suppose. Word of mouth. Publishing is marketing. In the end we all want to be rich, filthy rich. There's happiness, there are things you think important, but in the end money makes the world go round. Yes it does. And one of the biggest parts of books is that you can give them as a present, you can give them as a tactile thing. I think about thirty-six percent of the book market in Holland is purely presents. When I go out to see a friend I give a book or a bottle of wine. Now, what am I going to do with my digital gift? There is something in a channel when I come round, am I going to give him a printed thing: look, this is a ticket for your iTunes store? What am I going to hand over? Because it's all very interesting to think about publishing as marketing, but in the end somebody has to buy it, and word of mouth, I'm very much into that, it's very important, but I can't see it. So if I give you this [stuffed toy], and you see its feet, you get happy, people get happy. Just getting things is a normal, cognitive, whatever, surprising thing. But if I come round and say: I sent you an e-mail with *The Solar System* app. I think that's really shit. As a present.

**Maarten Asscher** - A comment from the publisher.

**Henry Volans** - My view on that, my slightly-giving-up view is there are lots of things someone in publishing might solve, but it's a bigger issue. I think actually that might just be solved in some other part of the world. Okay we'll maybe have a go, and if we can crack the right way to monetize little bits of poetry, or build your own anthologies or... But you have to really be sure the demand is there and actually that's a bigger issue about the nature of the value of digital content in general. It's almost flattering ourselves to think that we would be the people to solve that. You can gift apps now, a relatively new function. I've absolutely no idea, but as I said I'm sure that the vast majority of apps are self-purchased, so the simple thing is: this side of Christmas you sell books, because it's gifts, the other side of Christmas you sell digital content, because people have been given devices and are buying it for themselves. I'd be delighted if someone at Faber thinks of a brilliant idea for that, but probably we won't. It'll come from elsewhere.

**Eppo van Nispen tot Sevenaer** - That's interesting, because you take the whole channel. We talk about: I can make my own product, I can be my own publisher, I can do everything. But in the end, when it comes to selling, you leave it up to the Apple App Store. Like Sara says, the bricks and mortar will die, which I think eventually is true, but in the end what are you going to give at a party?

**Richard Nash** - One thing though that I think it's absolutely critical to clarify, and you can ignore everything I said in my keynote so long as you hear me out on this one: people do not necessarily write to make money. That is a categorically incorrect assessment of why most people write. Some people write to make money, you're absolutely correct in that regard, but I just four days ago spoke to the Writer's Digest Conference in New York, in which five hundred people spent 850 dollars. Take two of the people who came up to me afterwards. One is a VP of business development at Procter and Gamble. Another one is an engineer at Google. They make money so that they can spend it to become a better writer, and it's critical that we understand that as part of the market. When we think of the market for publishing we have to think of the market of connecting writers and readers, and not assume that the only market place is the market place for buying and selling books and apps. And that's what Faber Academy is driving. In the United States publishers are letting US universities make about six billion dollars a year from poets and fiction writers and non-fiction writers, and give that money to science labs to buy electron microscopes. I don't begrudge them the electron microscopes, but MFA programmes are profit centres for the universities, and I think we should keep that money in the writing and reading communities. So I just urge us to remember that the aspirational writer is a critical part of the ecosystem too.

**Maarten Asscher** - Fine, thank you.

**Eppo van Nispen tot Sevenaer** - Yes, that's true, but still publishing is marketing and marketing is in the end money.

**Maarten Asscher** - Will you please give the microphone to Lisa.

**Lisa Liping Zhang** - I've got two questions, to Marcus and Harry. My understanding from your talk is that *The Solar System* is designed for iPad, so do you give Apple the exclusive distribution rights? The product, can it only be distributed by them?

**Henry Volans** - It's not exclusive. They happen to be the sole channel through which it's sold at the moment, but there's no contractual exclusivity of any kind.

**Lisa Liping Zhang** - Okay, then can the product be distributed by other electronic devices?

**Henry Volans** - No.

**Lisa Liping Zhang** - So that still means in fact you are trapped with Apple.

**Henry Volans** - No, we're not trapped, we're just building for the platform which is at present most sensible, which provides the best transactional home for something.

**Jos de Mul** - It's not a prison, it's a home.

**Henry Volans** - Whenever you release an app... With some of our other ones you get lots of people saying: why isn't it available for Android? One of the reasons it's not available for Android is that developing for Android is hugely frustrating. It's a very fragmented thing. You've got to develop for numerous different screen sizes and resolutions and handsets and actually the control of Apple's world is, for many aspects of development, beneficial.

**Lisa Liping Zhang** - I see. And my second question is, since this product is a result of joint efforts, who owns the translation rights into other languages? You, as the publisher, or the writer?

**Henry Volans** - It's shared.

**Lisa Liping Zhang** - Sorry?

**Henry Volans** - It's shared. Everyone.

**Lisa Liping Zhang** - Everyone?

**Henry Volans** - Everyone shares in the proceeds.

**Lisa Liping Zhang** - But say I want to have the Chinese language rights of this book. Who shall I talk to? I can't talk to everyone. There must be one body that I can approach.

**Henry Volans** - We're looking after that. Faber's looking after that. Actually the moment... I'm probably saying lots more things than I should say today, but it's being translated into Japanese right now by the nephew of the great Japanese space scientist Itokawa after whom one of the asteroids on the home page is named.

**Marcus Chown** - That's a total accident.

**Lisa Liping Zhang** - Shall we talk about the Chinese rights later?

**Maarten Asscher** - Martien.

**Martien de Vletter** - I also have a question for Henry. We talked this morning about profiling and about how to find your customers or readers, whatever you call them. So my question is, or actually I have two questions. First of all, did you make a profile of the person for whom you were actually going to make this, or did you have a clear idea of who was going to buy it? Second question is: if you sell this, do you get the information about to whom you sold it, and how do you think these markets can be widened?

**Henry Volans** - On the first one, the answer is no, not explicitly. The interesting thing in this world of verticals and niches is there's still a lot of... I thought it was interesting when Chad mentioned the idea of the Hollywood focus group, because that was something I was thinking about earlier in the day, because as far as I understand it, that's a way of going as general as possible, arguably with artistic consequences. I think it would be a shame. As I've said, with projects like this, they are designed to be international, they're designed to be general. One gratifying thing is, a lot of children like *The Solar System* and that is very, very good. I think that by bringing in Marcus, we've brought his character to the writing, but I should say also I think it would be a great shame were it not possible to develop projects that were more domestic or more niche. That's a lot of what Faber is also about. But the great thing with this, because you are appealing to... Our aspiration would be to get it to everyone with an iPad.

**Martien de Vletter** - But how do you market it then? How do you try to sell it? How do people find it? Through all these apps that are available, how do you think...

**Henry Volans** - Well number one, get Apple to notice it. And we did, which is an enormous part of it. It's featured on the home page, not the books page but the home page of every single App Store in the world at the moment, so it's big in Mali and El Salvador...

**Martien de Vletter** - Did you have to pay for that?

**Henry Volans** - No, you can't pay for that, to the best of my knowledge.

**Marcus Chown** - I'm a journalist, so I've written about it quite a lot and done lots of interviews on the internet.

**Henry Volans** - I think that one of the interesting things in terms of rank and category is that if you can be on Gizmodo or on Boing Boing, say, then that's far more important than being in broadsheet newspapers, maybe with a couple of exceptions. The gallery from it was featured as the main visual splash on the *Guardian* site, but certainly on the charts you see spikes when things happen. This was in Gizmodo and that was one thing that triggered its rise. So there are certain new outlets. And the other answer is that as I said earlier, you go on and on. But sorry, Marcus, did you want to say anything more?

**Marcus Chown** - Well, no, you were probably going to say it, but we seem to be able to see the sales figures almost hour by hour, with total breakdowns for every single country in the world. Where do we get that from?

**Henry Volans** - Any app developer sees the data. You see it daily. And if anyone wants to see...

**Richard Nash** - It's anonymized, right?

**Henry Volans** - Yes.

**Martien de Vletter** - That's a pity.

**Maarten Asscher** - As far as we know, it's anonymized.

**Henry Volans** - If anyone wants to follow apps, there's a site called App Annie, which has the most extraordinary analytics and monitoring, from the start, of any app in the world. You don't need to be the developer; you can see if and how and exactly where Apple's featuring it. You can see its daily, monthly chart positionings, its highest positions in grossing, its highest positions in paid or free, and where it sat in its category, so you can actually go and do that and look at things.

**Peter Collingridge** - There's a huge amount of stuff that you can get, but the stuff you get from Apple is paltry. That's one of the reasons we build in our own analytics into the app. That's what I was talking about with Facebook Connect earlier. If you use Facebook Connect, get them to do it, then Facebook Connect gives you social and demographic data. It doesn't tell you who they are, but it tells you what city they live in, how old they are, whether they're male or female, what their favourite likes are. Because of the background in web marketing, we triangulate data from a hell of a lot of different points, whether it's from Apple for example, or bit.ly, or the e-mail stuff that we send out to work out where people are coming from.

**Marcus Chown** - Twitter is fascinating as well. Last week there was a burst of activity from Dutch people, I don't know why, maybe something appeared in a Dutch newspaper.

**Maarten Asscher** - This non-fiction conference, probably.

**Marcus Chown** - This week there was a lot of interest from French people. I wouldn't have even thought that they would download something in English, but they did.

**Maarten Asscher** - Ed, please.

**Edward Nawotka** - I'm interested to hear someone from Holland.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay.

**Erik Rigters** - I wanted to ask you whether you could imagine or consider – and this is actually for Henry and Peter – that you could do the same thing as you do now in apps but then online, just in a web browser, and then either not get people to pay for it, like Richard probably promises for the future, or let them pay a reasonable amount less than they have to now in the App Store.

**Peter Collingridge** - I think there's two things to say about that. First of all I think Apple has created the most magical piece of deception of our times, both with iTunes and with the App Store, in that people don't pay for things online. People pay for absolutely nothing online, with a couple of exceptions, but basically nothing – iTunes, for example, is a website, it just happens to be a website that's a downloadable application. If iTunes was a website, people wouldn't buy music from iTunes, because they'd see it as a website. It *is* a website, you just

download it, and I think their smoke and mirrors of making it look Apple-y was a masterstroke. Similarly, with apps themselves. Apps are generally websites in downloadable little things that you put on an iPhone and Apple getting people to pay for those was a second masterstroke. But I think pretty soon people are just going to go: what were we doing, paying for that? We can get this for free. I think it's inevitable that books, for one, but a lot of user experiences, are going to break out. As we've seen from Lisa's question, if you produce for iOS, it doesn't work on Android, it doesn't work on Windows 7, it doesn't work on Blackberry. The only thing that works across all of these devices is the web. And if you want to have true interoperability between all these devices you've got to put stuff in the web. But people don't pay for stuff in the web, and this is such a fundamental problem. I don't have the answer for it, but I think this is one of the reasons that publishers are rushing towards the App Store, because it's a new market, it's a market that didn't exist two years ago. It's phenomenally powerful in that respect.

**Henry Volans** - I think I disagree with Peter on that. At least I agree that... It's a small thing, but in that earlier discussion, the difference between fact and effect, it doesn't really matter what the fact is, because the effect is so profound. And the effect *is* profound. It's not just websites in the store. The possibility of reward has led to fantastic innovation, innovation that's then driven Apple's own products and things that come in. It's created the most wonderfully fertile environment for developers, everyone from bedroom developers to games companies. This isn't just publishers going for this, this is everyone from the gaming industry to, well, everyone with an interest in technology. Google have made innovations through it. And Dutch Layar, the augmented reality company. It has actually in my view spurred on genuine innovation, so it doesn't matter what its source is, the effect is real. I think the telling thing about Android is how Google, for its size and scale and wealth, finds things that it really ought to be able to do very hard, like coming up with a transactional payment system. It seems unable to do that. So I think this is really a profound thing. I don't think apps are going away. Of course it's got its critics, but the Mac App Store shows apps going in the other direction, back out onto the desktop.

**Erik Rigtters** - If I understand it correctly, there were about 160,000 downloads for it.

**Henry Volans** - That's not of *The Solar System*, that's of *The Elements*.

**Erik Rigtters** - Oh, so of *The Solar System*, how many?

**Henry Volans** - Well as Marcus said, in its first month it's approaching 30,000.

**Erik Rigtters** - Right.

**Henry Volans** - Not many people share actual sales figures for apps.

**Erik Rigtters** - I was just wondering, and in my head was 160,000, but anyway...

**Maarten Asscher** - In his head too...

**Erik Rigtters** - I'm just wondering whether for a company like Faber & Faber it would be interesting to make something beautiful like you did and put it out there on the web and then use that to create your own reach without MicroGate picking that up. Maybe not for now but maybe for the future.

**Henry Volans** - Good stuff comes out of being able to charge for it. That's pretty simple to me. Actually among all the thinking, if you've got a chance of some financial reward for something it will spur people to do things. This ain't charitable. Okay, real writers write because they have to, because they've got this sort of gnawing desire and they'll do it if they're in poverty or not, some of them, but the App Store has fostered, unarguably, great innovations.

**Peter Collingridge** - I completely agree, in the vast majority of cases. You could put the planets, *The Solar System* online, you just wouldn't be able to charge for it, or if you did nobody would come.

**Henry Volans** - And it wouldn't be as good, because you can't touch it. You can't touch a planet and move it with your finger and it's a subtle difference.

**Peter Collingridge** - Well, you could on the iPad, you could put it in a browser and then...

**Richard Nash** - Over the long run I think, as I understood what you're saying, I think it's critical to understand that when you look at the long run, and it's not a long one, but if you look at the history of let's say AOL, you look at the history of walled gardens on the internet, there are periods of time when you can make serious ducats, when there are, as the economists like to call it, 'rents', when there are excess profits to be made. They don't last, they've never lasted. That's not to say that there won't be lots of innovation, it's not to say

there won't be great products created, it's not to say there won't be some significant money made over a period of time, but over the long run the open nature of the web undermines AOL's, Apple's, it will undermine Facebook's capacity to control and stop entrants, lower priced, more dynamic, less complacent people from coming in. As I understood it, that was your argument over the long run.

**Peter Collingridge** - Yes, I'm not disagreeing. I think the App Store is amazing and I think there's every reason to hope for it to continue for as long as possible, but what I was getting at is that the fundamental difference between... With the exception of mobile apps like Layar that you talk about, there's no technological difference between something being in the browser and in the app. The thing that's great about the App Store is that it provides a culture for people to pay for it, and that's one of the reasons why publishers have jumped on top of it.

**Henry Volans** - I just think even if it's an illusion, it's real. Even if you know what's under the bonnet, it's the same, it doesn't matter, because it doesn't matter to the consumer. To get something straight, I think apps are not the answer to all our problems. I mean it's ridiculous, I agree, when magazine publishers think an app is the solution to their content strategy. It's not. The iPad owes you nothing, for sure. I'm completely with you there, and indeed Richard's kindly mentioned the Faber Academy, which is a really good business, and before I started even thinking about apps I started a project to think about how we could take creative writing learning online. It's quite hard, so that project's taking a while, but it's bubbling under in the background. I know this is futile, but the expression walled garden and the expression paywall and the hatred with which much of the internet uses them really annoys me. There's a paywall when you go into a shop and buy something physically. I actually think we need to try and change the perception. Paywall is a ridiculous, clumsy word for paying for something. Someone has made something, there's not a right to that being free. I know I'm being reactionary.

**Richard Nash** - Well, there was a right for almost all of human existence. For almost all of human existence words were words. Copyright was invented in 1708, basically because printers were running a cartel for twenty years and parliament decided: if anyone's going to run a cartel around here, we're going to run the damn cartel. The Germans didn't follow suit until midway through the nineteenth century, during which they produced way more scientific knowledge and literature than was produced in Britain during the concomitant period of time,

so there's nothing in natural law, in Hobbesian natural law that says that culture is an individual's property. It's a legal construct of very recent vintage and it exists in many countries as a government-granted monopoly that has a purpose. In the US constitution it's 'for the advancement of the lively arts and sciences', and only to the extent to which it advances the lively arts and sciences are we granting this monopoly to individuals. So I think it's really critical to be careful about not fetishizing private ownership of the cultural commons.

**Henry Volans** - I think it's less complicated than that. I think if we thought everything that was less than two hundred years old was young... That is a long time to me. It sounds like going back to the dark ages to me. I think it's pretty straightforward. We find it quite easy to value intellectual property in most legal contexts, in much of life, and I just find it very frustrating, this sense that because it can be copied it should be. I'm not saying I'm going to be right, but I do find it frustrating.

**Maarten Asscher** - I would like to make use of the opportunity of Ed Nawotka holding the microphone to ask him one question before he asks a question in this direction. You are running a website magazine called Publishing Perspectives.

**Edward Nawotka** - Yes.

**Maarten Asscher** - If you re-run the discussion of the past fifteen minutes, with the possible exception of the last four minutes, do you have the feeling that we are talking about quality non-fiction publishing, or are we in a separate digital reality that is a sort of neighbouring sector to publishing but is something else?

**Edward Nawotka** - Well this goes right to the question I was going to ask. Because my question is one of diction. I think one of the most revealing things Henry said earlier was: the reason we called it a book was because we can charge a lot more for it than we could for an app. This summer I learned how to shoot film, and I use the word film deliberately, because I was told that as soon as you call it video it's cheap, film is expensive, so I'm curious how much we're really just playing with diction. I mean, Peter, how much are you really a software developer? Henry, how much are you really a technologist embedded within a publishing company? I know you became an editor. How much of this is really diction, and I'm curious about the audience. Because we just came out of Digital Book World in New

York, and the general sense there was that publishers were talking about apps and the feeling was: Good God we don't have the skill set and we don't have the cash to do this, and we don't even know how long this is going to last. So there was a survey done and eighty percent of them said: let's not do it. So I'm curious as to what extent this is applicable to the larger serious non-fiction publishing community and really that we're just playing with diction and pretence. I'm not being antagonistic, because God knows I love what you all are doing, I'm just saying: how much of this is pretence when it comes to calling yourselves publishers? Do you know what I mean? I mean pretence for the fact of marketing. Because we've all agreed that publishing is marketing. Sorry to be so blunt.

**Maarten Asscher** - No, it's crystal clear. I would suggest that all the four of you speakers give a brief comment in response to what Ed just said, and that we try to close our session then and save the rest of this fascinating discussion for tomorrow. Peter, would you like to start please.

**Peter Collingridge** - I don't think it matters. Really, I've never known what to call myself. I got shortlisted for an award called Publishing Entrepreneur. Somebody said to us the other day: you're really a software publisher, because you own copyright in software and you're publishing it with no incremental cost. Other people call us a digital publisher; other people call us a digital consultancy. It really doesn't matter. Like I was saying earlier, I think in terms of the activity that we're all doing it's all the same, it's about matchmaking content to people who want to have that content.

**Maarten Asscher** - Richard.

**Richard Nash** - My instinct is that the critical issue centres around relationships and the conversation that content engenders, rather than focusing on the content containers themselves, which will evolve and have multiple prices. On the pricing issue and the idiosyncrasies that you've noticed, I would strongly recommend a book call *Priceless* by William Poundstone, which is a summary of the literature of people like Daniel Ariely and others, a group of economists called behavioural economists who've been looking a lot at how tremendously irrational pricing is and how easily people can be manipulated into having different perceptions of what is reasonable in pricing. But I think over the long run it is by controlling the conversation and the culture that we will make our money, not by controlling the objects of content.

**Maarten Asscher** - Marcus.

**Marcus Chown** - Well, I'm a writer, and I'll still be a writer even if the publishing world collapses, I'll just be hungrier, that's all.

**Maarten Asscher** - Very good. Henry, the last words of the afternoon are for you.

**Henry Volans** - Well, on a similar theme to Marcus, I think...

**Maarten Asscher** - Even if authors collapse you will still be a publisher.

**Henry Volans** - Having just had a son, I wouldn't want to feed my children just on the process of making apps. It's a hard business. I think you need to spread it out. I think the thing to do is just to be honest in admitting that what you're doing is changing all the time, that much of the time you don't know what you're doing and that you just sort of follow your nose through it.

**Maarten Asscher** - I think that's a brilliant summing up. I would like to conclude this session with a great thank you to these four speakers, who have also developed their themes, our themes, wonderfully well over a discussion that I enjoyed hugely myself. In the morning session tomorrow we will try to get these subjects further over the borders from one domestic market to another, and look at the role of translators and editors and other professionals, whether enhanced or not. Warm applause please for our four speakers.

**Saturday 9.30-11.20 am**

**Digitally crossing borders**

**Maarten Asscher** - Welcome back on the Saturday morning. We're here again for two sessions, with a coffee break in between. In the first session we will try to cross borders with the insights that we exchanged yesterday, and in the second session we'll try to recap many of the points raised during the whole conference and dig deeper into a few of the key issues that we have discussed so far. That is another way of saying that we will try to draw some conclusions, but with this subject at hand, which is not even one subject but perhaps several dozen subjects at the same time, that is almost impossible and you will not have expected of yourself, or of your moderator, I hope, that clear conclusions could be drawn. When I was a boy there was a comic strip called *Asterix and Obelix* about the country Gallia (France), which was occupied by the Romans. They had occupied the whole country except for one tiny village that kept offering resistance to the Romans. I think on this side of the table we have three inhabitants of that village, who each in their own way are resisting the Romans. First of all I would like to introduce to you Chad Post, who resists ninety-seven percent of Anglo-Saxon publishing by offering three percent of world culture to the United States. Open Letter Books, your Three Percent initiative, could almost be called a movement, I think, and I've admired you for it for years and I'm very pleased that we have you on our panel. I'd like to ask you to deliver your presentation. Chad, please.

**Chad Post** - I've never given a speech exactly on this. I know I was going to talk about reviewing, and I'll get to that as I go along, but I think in some ways, what we talked about yesterday and what we've done at Open Letter and at Three Percent are very complementary in the sense that we're almost a case study for what a lot of people have been talking about, just in a very small, very strange sort of way. So in case you don't know, Open Letter Books started four years ago at the University of Rochester and we were only going to do literature in translation. So we publish ten books a year and we knew this from the start, and that we were going to do very high quality literature which is, as Maarten alluded to, something that Americans hate, or the perception is that Americans hate this. No one does books in translation. The commonly cited figure that we've also really popularized is three percent, that three percent of all the books published in American are works that have been translated. If you look at fiction and poetry specifically, and serious non-fiction, it's a very small, small,

small number, like hundreds of books and that's it. It's tiny. So we knew immediately that we had a certain number of difficulties that were facing us. We're doing something that there's an audience for, maybe, and I'll get to that in a second too, but there's not a huge audience. The perception was that we couldn't be very successful at this. We're doing books that don't necessarily, to use your phrase Richard, 'inform or entertain'. We're doing books that are challenging, in a sense, in that we're intentionally being selective and we publish to be challenging for a very specific reason, in that we felt: these are the books that would help culture, that would insert themselves and help change things or help give people a perspective that would add something. I'll talk more about that in a second too. But when we started we took the theory, which you articulated very well yesterday too, of being very closely aligned with our customers. You know publishing has for many years had a lot of problems because publishers hate to deal with their readers. Just to give one quick anecdote. At a conference on translation in Salzburg, there was a guy, what's his name? Guy that runs Hanser Verlag.

**Maarten Asscher** - Michael Krüger.

**Chad Post** - Michael Krüger. Yes. We had a panel on digital things and digital publishing and he was just irritable the whole day: 'I hate digital things, you're ruining my newspapers, people don't read a newspaper any more, it's all online, I hate it.' It brought up the point that digital doesn't just mean publishing as an object, but that it's a way to reach readers and to connect and market things and be in touch with people. He was saying: 'I don't want to talk to those people; I don't want anything to do with them.' So it's very clear that publishers don't want to be connected. Now we wanted to go in the opposite direction. We know we have a small audience, we have to be next to them. So we did a number of things very specifically. We wanted to brand ourselves, so all our covers are very similar, they all have a sort of Open Letter look to them, they're all within a very limited aesthetic range, they're of a certain nature, so you know what you're getting with Open Letter books. We started a subscription model, which I want to tell you about in a second, where other people can subscribe and get all ten books of the year for a hundred dollars or five of them for sixty dollars, and we made that one of our main components. We also have Three Percent, which is the website you alluded to that was a complement to the press. In a sense it was a blog about international literature and the business of publishing, about books that weren't being translated and all these issues, and it had a review site along with it. The Three Percent site has probably fiftyfold more readers than any of our particular titles, which is sort of a problem because it is

free and easy and everyone's interested in it. We added on things to that such as a translation database and most recently a best translated book award, which has grown in size and I'll talk about that more in a second as well.

One of the problems that we did face and that does tie into what we've been talking about too is the knowledge that booksellers are going away. When I worked at Dalkey Archive Press prior to this, booksellers were a key component to being able to reach an audience, so there'd be those fifty booksellers throughout America who were really key, important, interested readers, who would help promote our books, and in some ways we wanted to imitate that model with Open Letter, so that we'd be able to connect with these readers. But they're vanishing, they're just going away. There's not going to be a lot of independent stores, there are a few that are going to stay around in New York and in San Francisco that are curatorial and interesting and great, but for most readers throughout the country there's not an independent store, there's a Barnes and Noble where no one cares. Those people don't read books or recommend books and on the whole hand-selling has sort of evaporated. We see that as a big problem. So that's one of the reasons that we started the subscription model.

We knew that we would have that problem, we thought that we could utilize the internet and our ability to do things to reach readers directly, hence the subscription series and everything else, and one of the big lures all along was that e-books would solve a lot of our problems, because we would suddenly be able to market to individuals who could buy a book right there. So if there's someone who wants to read an Open Letter book in Boise, Idaho, they order it from Amazon, they order directly from us, or, in theory, they could download the e-book at some point in time, otherwise they're not going to have access. But the big problem for us became thinking about how to reach these people. How do you get them to know about stuff? Because there's no easy way. We talk about word of mouth, we talk about these things, but we're frequently talking about books that are essentially somewhat popular. Our books are not popular and they're not going to be popular. This isn't necessarily to be a negative naysayer, but they tend to be pattern-breaking.

There's two other obsessions that I have, aside from publishing and literature, and they're the neurosciences to some degree and behavioural economics, but the psychology aspect of that. So I started thinking a lot and talking a lot recently with people about how readers actually find books, and not readers in the aggregate but individual people. When you talk about the

reader, talk about the reader as one person. Since I work at a university, I can interview a lot of students and ask them a lot of questions. You'd think these would be the literary people who'd be reading our sorts of books, and so forth. And there's a few things I figured out. One is that they tend to not buy books. At all. They buy ten to twenty books maximum in a year and that's much higher than the average American, so we're talking about a very small, limited number. They also claimed to never read reviews, don't read websites, could care less if anyone tweets about anything, and they have thousands of friends on Facebook and talk about how they buy their books because of people recommending them, however all of them insist they never bought a book because they just saw someone recommend it on Facebook. They only listen to two or three of their friends; they're very specific in that those are the people who influence them.

So think about this more. There's a book by Jonah Lehrer, who's a very interesting writer and neuroscientist, and he's written two books, one called *How We Decide*, a sort of behavioural economics from more a brain angle, and one called *Proust as a Neuroscientist*, which is about the interplay between art and science. In *Proust as a Neuroscientist* there's a section on music and on how we listen to music and how and why we appreciate music, and how certain things sound cacophonous or don't sound cacophonous and how this changes over time. Part of the explanation of how that works is that there's a part of your brain which when you hear music is trying to predict the pattern, so it tries to figure out what's coming next and when it's right it gives you a reward, a dopamine sort of reward, so you feel like you're right, this is good, and it's very self-reinforcing. So when you hear a song that you know, that you've heard before in the past, it tingles you, it makes you feel good. When you hear something that's completely different in some way, that's a huge problem, because it doesn't sound right, you can't predict the pattern, it sounds bad. You have to sort of become accustomed to that to then understand that pattern and how to appreciate it.

Now we were extrapolating from the brain and music to society and a readership; I do think there is something to the fact that readers tend to like repetition, we like things that we understand. This is why publishers chase after the next *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, or Dan Brown, or whatever. We want to find the next thing that sort of fits that pattern. Sit-coms on American TV are all the same. Once something changes the mould slightly, everything's an imitation thereafter because it feels comfortable. When we're doing European fiction or international literature, or literature in general that's of a more serious nature, one of the

reasons that it tends to be more serious, and this goes for non-fiction as well, is that it's challenging certain ideas or perceptions or patterns. This is why I say that it's going to be not that popular. It's not necessarily that that's a bad thing. Over the long term it could be very influential and very popular, but in a short-term business-minded sales way it doesn't quite fit, because it doesn't fit people's patterns. So one of the main obsessions has become: when people read four books a year, buy ten books a year, and they're obsessed with their patterns, how do you get them to buy something, or even hear about something, discover something that's outside of that?

Another set of problems that relates to behavioural economics is a sense of priming, where you have certain expectations, you hear certain words, you know certain things, and it influences how you identify with that and what happens when you encounter that. So this is a random experimental example, but I thought it was super-interesting. They did an experiment with NYU students, who are young undergrads, involving word association. They gave them a list of words that had to do with things like ancient, Florida, retirement, things that are 'old' words and they had to write whatever they thought of, and they gave another set of people questions having to do with anything dealing with young, vibrant, whatever. Then they timed how long it took people to walk out of the building. The people who'd read the 'old' words took much longer, twice as long, to walk down the same hallway, because it had influenced the way they were perceiving. So when you're talking about literature and translation and reviews, one of the big problems that we always face is that all the words that they use in their reviews are negative. This is going to sound somewhat offensive, but they'll say things like: they're musty, they're old, they're European, they're sometimes too long, challenging, difficult, hard, it's work, it's not entertainment any more, it's something different and something that a reader would struggle with. So you've got, in this age of overabundance, as Richard pointed out, millions of things, everything's available, you want to find a certain pattern and we're publishing musty old European literature that's challenging and long. So in a way it's a weird self-defeating thing, but what we've found, or what I've sort of found – and I've no good answers; that's why this speech sort of rambles because I don't really know how to change that, or how to deal with that – but we have seen a few things with Three Percent, and there's a word that I think will point in a certain direction, and I use you as an example too Richard, in the sense that when we have everything available, everyone connects to the internet, it all becomes sort of flat in a lot of ways, anything can reach anyone, any reader can reach anything, any author can reach any reader and so on and so forth, it almost seems like

there's going to be almost a rehierarchizing, so that rather than based on money and old-time prestige, it will be based more on personality and content. So our website has become extremely influential and has led to... I don't want to say we led to a movement, but there is a class of other websites and other people who are now talking about translation as a cool thing, or as a sexier thing. And I think that by doing that we've grown and we've gotten other people attracted to us, so we're starting to influence things on a better level, even if it is still an uphill battle. So we don't sell that many copies of our books, but I think it's a good idea.

There's a bunch of random things I wanted to tell you guys but I'll wait and tell you later, but I'll just tell you one story, or really two stories. When I was talking to my students, I was talking to them about the way they find books and hear about books. They always referred to it as either their friend recommended it or it's serendipitous, and serendipitous in the sense that they would browse something and find the book that was out of order. This was a big deal to them. It was a big deal for multiple readers. This seemed strange to me but it sort of made sense, in that it was the thing that didn't fit any more. So they'd find a G author in the T category and feel: this must be interesting; I'll look at this. It was catching their attention, which is weird. Then I was talking with them about music and about how music is omnipresent in our lives, frequently. If you go into a store you hear music in The Gap, then you hear it on a commercial, then it's on a CD and it's very easy to consume and to find new music. Finding new music is not a difficult challenge for people, compared to books, which are never anywhere: you've never walked into Banana Republic and heard people reading poetry over the loudspeaker. It's just not around in that way. So it's a much more complicated process for them to hit upon these things. So in terms of the serendipity, I use Goodreads all the time, I've become a fanatic about it, for no really great reason aside from that I love just writing random reviews and putting things on there. And I always check. Every day I get an e-mail that has recommendations, or whatever my friends did. So one day over the summer – and this relates to a bookseller question too about where they'd gone and what's happening – over the summer, there's this guy called Tosh Berman, who runs a bookstore in Los Angeles, and he's a friend of mine and he recommended, or he gave a five-star review, to Albert Cossery's *A Splendid Conspiracy*. So I read the review and thought: oh, this sounds cool; I've never heard of Albert Cossery before but I should have, he's a French writer from Egypt, he should be in my database; I should be aware of this. So I marked it on Goodreads as something I wanted to read, which automatically fed it into my Facebook profile newsfeed thing and I went on my way. The next day there's a bookseller, Geoff Waxman from Chicago,

who recommended another Cossery book that came out this year called *The Jokers*, and he gave that five stars. So I looked at that and thought: that's kind of weird, two people within two days, these two booksellers from across the country. So I marked that to read and it goes out on my Facebook thing. I had my kids that weekend and so we went off to the forest and they're like throwing rocks and dirt and crap at each other and I was checking my phone because I didn't want to deal with that, and a Facebook thing came through that someone had posted on my Wall. It was a friend of mine who had posted: do you know this Cossery character? Because I just looked up his Wikipedia page and he sounds awesome. It's all about laziness and he only wanted to write books because he was lazy, so he wrote eight books over sixty years and that was too many, so this sounds great. So I thought: oh, perfect. So I grabbed the kids, I dusted them off and at the bookstore they had one book, they had *A Splendid Conspiracy* there, so I got *A Splendid Conspiracy* and read it and absolutely loved it. So there was this weird coincidence of a Goodreads-meets-Facebook-meets-cell-phone kind of moment, in which I discovered something I'd not been aware of. And to then reverse everything, later, two days later, I was in a bar, finishing the book. I had twenty pages left or something, I was having a glass of wine and finishing it and there were these two cute girls sitting over at the side and I thought: oh they're probably going to make fun of me because I'm reading a book in a bar like I'm a loser. One of them said: oh what are you doing, what are you reading? So I started telling her and she got all excited about this guy, he sounded really cool, so I gave her the book and then... That's the end of that story. Never saw the book again, nor the girl.

**Maarten Asscher** - She's now your wife.

**Chad Post** - No, that's the end of that. Thanks.

**Maarten Asscher** - On the factual side, could you please tell me how your activities, both Open Letter Books and the Three Percent website, how they are funded?

**Chad Post** - Oh, God. Well, the way that we're funded is we're part of the University of Rochester. So the University of Rochester has hired three of us to create a press that's part of the university's literary translation programme. They're our first and main source of income. Now in addition to that we have our sales, which are modest but contribute heavily to that bottom line or to covering our expenses, and then as a non-profit, being at the university, in the US you can apply for a grant, so we get money from the National Endowment for the Arts,

the New York City Council for the Arts and in theory from other private foundations and from individuals. We've gotten some stuff but not an enormous amount, but in theory you can get a big donor that can help offset the costs. But primarily the university.

**Maarten Asscher** - If I may ask, what percentage of the total budget of what you do are you able to get from the market, from sales?

**Chad Post** - From the sales it's about thirty-five percent.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay, thanks.

**Chad Post** - And I think that's going to grow actually too, because we've no backlist yet.

**Maarten Asscher** - And how many people are involved in the press and in the website?

**Chad Post** - We're very strange in a sense, because there's no other press set up like this in the country, so we're part of the university, we're not even a separate entity, technically. We have three people: myself, a guy who does all the design and production, and someone who does editorial stuff, the copyediting, things like that. So the three of us work full time on the press, but as part of the university there's a woman who does communications and promotion and we have a store that's related to the university, and they'll help send that out to different people. So whenever we need to use them we can, because we get a lot of attention for the university. There are people in their fundraising department who work for us as well. So they're not technically our employees, they're part of the university, but they help us. It's a strange set-up.

**Maarten Asscher** - Thanks. Are there other questions to Chad? Peter.

**Peter Collingridge** - You were talking about selling e-books from the site and that not really working. Are you selling physical books as well?

**Chad Post** - Yes, we started our e-book thing and we had a hard time getting rights initially, because a lot of the foreign publishers, agents, estates were not cool with the idea of e-books. Because it was before the Kindle, before a lot of things, where they felt: if we give you the e-book rights the book will be available for free download from some site and we'll never sell anything. So they were very resistant. But we have the rights to maybe about ten or twelve of

our twenty-nine titles, and we've been putting them all into the different formats. We haven't made an announcement about this yet for various reasons, but initially we were selling a couple of copies here and there, and then this month actually, about a week ago, suddenly fourteen copies of this book *A Thousand Peaceful Cities* by Jerzy Pilch, a Polish author, were sold in one day through Amazon's site. We're not totally sure why. My suspicion is... It sounds really bad to be sceptical about it, but we thought great, yeah, fourteen people, that's some group. Or it was that they all thought it was *A Thousand Splendid Suns* or something like that and just screwed up. I'm not entirely sure. We did sell a bunch at once, but the physical books far outsell our e-books right now.

**Peter Collingridge** - I'm really interested by this subscription model, because that's something that I've tried to encourage among publishers in the UK who have a strong identity, where their editorial vision is consistent across their titles. Can you talk a little more about that?

**Chad Post** - Yes, it was very much based on that. I think that there's limits to it because we have a specific thing. It's literature in translation, it's of a certain variety, it's relatively inexpensive and there's not too many books. Ten books a year is as many as a lot of people would buy in America and yet it's not excessive. So if there's someone who's doing thirty or forty books I think it becomes problematic, because we even get e-mails from people who say: I'll pay for the subscription but you can stop sending me books now, because I can't read all of these things. Or, you know: there's a lot of stuff, they're difficult books, it takes time. But it worked very well. At the beginning it grew steadily. We announced it through the website, through other ways, we got a few articles written about it, and then there was an article in *The New York Times* last December on the press that talked about the subscription model and our subscribers almost tripled overnight. In three days we had almost three hundred subscribers sign up just from that article alone, so that created a big boost, and we have a lot of people who do it as a way of supporting the press. If we ask for donations they'll just buy a subscription. So it's been a very good thing for us but it's something that we can also expand, because we haven't done much in the way of marketing with it or really a drive or anything like that.

**Peter Collingridge** - Do you fulfil them from the office?

**Chad Post** - We fulfil them in the office, yes. So it goes outside of all of our distribution stuff. So it's more income to us. It's a little bit of a pain in the ass, packing the books, but we have interns, students all over the place that are wanting to do things.

**Maarten Asscher** - Other points?

**Edward Nawotka** - It's worth noting that the subscription model... There was a good piece on the Digital Book World site about three months ago by Emily Williams that goes into all the presses that have subscription models. You were again sort of in at the start of this, but Archipelago does a subscription model, Ugly Duckling... So you're seeing this as a way of sustaining small presses and guaranteeing income, and it seems to be really catching on.

**Maarten Asscher** - What would be the difference between the subscription model and the age-old book club model?

**Chad Post** - Well I think with the subscription it's mainly that it's just our books. I would think of a book club as being more books from all over that are grouped around something. And I think that would also be a very viable thing. If certain presses worked together and said: three Open Letter books, three Archipelago books, three Ugly Duckling books, or whatever, so that it worked like a book club set-up, I think that would be successful.

**Maarten Asscher** - An independent book club.

**Chad Post** - Yes. There would be possibilities, there are possibilities, we just don't have the manpower for furthering that idea. Because we send a letter. Every subscriber gets a letter that I write, about where we came up with this book, why we're publishing it, what it was, why it's important, giving some context to this. And then usually there's an interview with the author or something. So there's an additional piece of information, some way of framing a book that comes out of nowhere. There's things that we could be doing to further that, like having a book club sort of discussion or some things online, but we just haven't had the time.

**Maarten Asscher** - Do you make any distinction between fiction and non-fiction in your approach?

**Chad Post** - The only non-fiction author we publish is Dubravka Ugresic. So we do her essays, which are very narrative-based. She sort of fits our same mould. So we don't, no.

**Ramy Habeeb** - When you get rights, are you only getting US English rights?

**Chad Post** - No, we usually get World English rights.

**Ramy Habeeb** - So you make money out of selling the distribution rights to the UK and...

**Chad Post** - I would love to say that we do, but so far we haven't had one. We've given some effort to that and we haven't found much success unfortunately, because the books are very particular and we've actually found with the e-book thing... Our e-book sales for the UK are actually decent. In a way it's solving a certain problem for us because we're having distribution issues with the UK.

**Ramy Habeeb** - And did you ever finish the last twenty pages?

**Chad Post** - Of Cossery? Yes, I did, I did. I read it and then I gave it away. It's gone.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay, thank you very much, Chad. My left-hand neighbour, Nicky Harman, is next, for a talk about the translators' perspective, with a special eye on China. Please.

**Nicky Harman** - So I'm speaking to you today as a representative of the something like 0.1% of 3%. One of a small community who produce, help to produce, Chinese literature in English. When I was thinking about what I was going to say when I came here, I thought of the image that the Chinese to English translator has become enmeshed, inevitably, in the spiders' web of the publishing world, but of course we're deeply enmeshed in another kind of web too, the world wide web which has transformed the Chinese to English translation world and made it possible for people like me to work in the UK. At the most basic level, the web provides all sorts of language resources, and not just online dictionaries but linguistic corpora, documents, anything you really want for the actual translation work. More importantly for today, I'd say, it provides access to authors in China, their works, what they write about, blogs, discussions and so on. Which makes it possible for me not just to go to China and find authors, which I do, but to get access to the virtual side of China.

So having found my favourite author, my favourite work, how do I go about getting a commission from a US or a UK publisher to translate it so that they'll publish it? Well it ain't that easy. There are countless translation courses and summer schools in the UK that I know

about, which will talk endlessly about how to make the perfect pitch to a publisher: exactly what you need to write, what kind of synopsis, how much of a sample translation, how to prepare yourself, how to find out who to write to, and so on and so forth. In my experience, for Chinese to English, it very rarely comes up with the goods, that is, it very rarely provides people like me with a commission to translate a book, whether it's fiction or non-fiction. So that sounds pretty negative. Publishers of course will tell you that they absolutely love the system, because it gets other people to do the legwork, and we run around rather like plumbers or electricians producing quotes for them and the end result is often that we translators are disappointed, but they're also disappointed, because they don't get what they think they're going to get. One of the problems is that because they're not able to read the source materials themselves, they're not really clear about what Chinese writers are writing and how – again, in both fiction and non-fiction. I think one of the solutions is that publishers need to know a lot more about the publishing world in China, the writing world. This particularly, I think, applies to genre fiction – detective fiction, romantic fiction and so on – which of course exists in abundance in China. But with genre fiction, as we're all aware, readers have very specific expectations when they go to a detective novel that's either written in English or been translated into English, and Chinese detective novels are quite a different kettle of fish, if that's not mixing too many metaphors.

Of course the problem is also that if a publisher in the UK is only going to produce one book per year translated from Chinese, or even one every two years, it's got to be a very special book in their view. They've got to be very sure that readers are going to read it. I was talking to Lisa over coffee before we started today and we both agreed that this is a self-fulfilling prophesy. If publishers in the UK think that no one is going to read that book, then readers will never get the opportunity to make up their minds whether they want to read it or not. Also of course translators are not perfect, we need to learn an awful lot more about the publishing world and what kinds of things publishers are looking for. I speak from bitter personal experience. I do know a little bit more now than I used to.

So that's enough of the negative. I want to talk a bit about some possible solutions, and the overall theme of the possible solutions is: investment in communications. That's communications between translators and publishers, between publishers and Chinese publishers, between translators and Chinese authors, and so on. Western publishers need to ensure that they become better informed; translators won't get very far if they act on their

own. But here's where the investment comes in. Collectively, translators can do a lot and have already started to do a lot. Paper Republic, a website that some of you have come across, is an online community of translators from Chinese which has developed over the last three to four years. It was set up by Eric Abrahamson, who's an American translator based in Beijing, and it was a small online community. At the beginning it was basically a blog. Eric had big ideas and I got in touch with him, and to cut a long story short we got funding. The funding, it may surprise you to know, came from the Arts Council England. Why? Well, the reasons are complex, but we had a champion, a woman called Kate Griffin, who could see the possibilities and the potential of a website like that which helped to produce books in English from Chinese. So we got a year's funding. Paper Republic developed, it became much more than a blog, it became a place for translators to put their profiles, for translators to put sample translations of their favourite books, for publishers to read about translators when they wanted to find a translator, and for everyone to bang on about their favourite topic. We still get quite serious and interesting articles written by fellow translators about irony in Chinese, or lack of, about how you translate swear words, and so on and so forth. When I walked in here yesterday some kind person said that they'd looked at the website and how accessible and easy it was. I recommend it. I'm going to stick these on the front after. Take a flyer and have a look at it.

But of course Paper Republic has developed a lot since those days. Although we haven't been able to list many translations which came as a direct result of authors being profiled on Paper Republic by translators, we've had many other successes in informing publishers about what's out there, allowing translators to showcase their talent. I've had a very important commission which came to me through someone reading my profile on Paper Republic. It's also been a very good way of mentoring new translators, which is something that I feel particularly strongly about. So of course there still is a role for individual translators to work individually, outside and through Paper Republic. As a small example, I've set up a London-based group which is called the China Fiction Book Club. It's actually a group of people who like to read fiction in Chinese, who are not currently working as translators, but we get together every couple of months and practice translating bits from a short story and discuss translation. Anyway, so it's an offline community with an online outlet, because we've publicized our activities through Paper Republic and one woman in particular – I'm very pleased about this – found a new author, actually a Tibetan author writing in Chinese, through some of the books which I had circulated in the Book Club, decided that she liked his short stories, translated a

sample, put it up on Paper Republic under her own profile and was then asked by the editor of an anthology of Chinese short stories to do the whole short story for money. So happiness all round.

Paper Republic has developed again since then, with a further kind of funding. And funding is really important for work like this. Of course we put in many, many hours of unpaid work, but Eric and another man called Bruce Humes, both based in China, have just launched an industry newsletter. You have to subscribe on Paper Republic but it's free at the moment, and this industry newsletter is specifically aimed at publishers. I sent the link around, but I've also brought along a few hard copies, which I'll stick on the front there and people can take away. So this is really I think the way forward for Paper Republic, much more specifically publisher-focused.

Oh yes, I forgot to say who that was funded by: the Beijing Book Fair, rather surprisingly. So here you have two totally disparate forms of funding, the Arts Council England and the Beijing Book Fair. Another thing that Paper Republic is doing, those based in Beijing, is organizing a visit of Western publishers to Beijing to meet writers. This is going to happen, the first one organized by Paper Republic takes place next week. This is not the first such visit. Toby Eady, who's a British agent, and Xinran, who's a Chinese writer living in the UK, have organized various of them before; I think this year will be the fourth or the fifth. But there's always room for more. Each group is only going to be about twenty publishers and agents, and I believe the Paper Republic one is fully subscribed. I hope to read more about it on Paper Republic after they've been and gone.

I think that's really all I want to say. I wanted to say more about the role of the web in Chinese writing, which is extremely important, but possibly it may come up later. Or you can approach me personally, because it's the thing I'm most keen on. So I think my summary is that individual translators have a role to play; collectively they have an even bigger role to play; funding, however many hours we put in free, is even more important; and finally: Paper Republic is a very sexy website.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay. There's room for one brief question. Yes, please.

**Emile op de Coul** - I wanted to ask: apart from the funding from the Beijing Book Fair, do you receive any interest, comments or support from Chinese publishers as well?

**Nicky Harman** - Not yet, at least not as far as I know, but I think that's something which is imminent. Paper Republic has actually set up an arm of itself as a company and this makes it much easier to do business with other companies. I think that contact with Chinese publishers is going to develop, certainly through the Book Fair and probably individually as well.

**Maarten Asscher** - Thank you. In view of the clock I would like to save further questions and translation issues for after our coffee break and I would like to step over to Ramy, whose presence here is singularly apt in view of what's happening in Egypt, with the digital reality, well, undergoing spectacular developments. Ramy, please.

**Ramy Habeeb** - For those of you who don't know me, I am the exiled Egyptian. I know I don't look it, but...

**Maarten Asscher** - Like Albert Cossery, by the way.

**Ramy Habeeb** - Absolutely. He and I are going to stage a protest at The Hague later on if anyone wants to join in.

**Maarten Asscher** - He died one and a half years ago, but never mind.

**Ramy Habeeb** - And also I just wanted to address something that Henry Volans asked me last night. He asked me for an example of Egyptian humour. I think Mubarak's speech last night fits the bill. To the Americans in the audience who have a bit more of a blunt sense of humour, his speech roughly translates as 'Naah naah na-naah naah [forearm jerk]'.

Anyway, so my name is Ramy Habeeb, I'm the director of Kotobarabia, I started it about five years ago and I must say that I really enjoy spending time with people like Peter Collingridge, because when he speaks to me I just think he's like a space-age astronaut from the future. Because I know that we talk a lot about tablets and whatnot, but I'd like to show you an Egyptian tablet [clay tablet]. So we are kind of in a different realm and in a different era. I'd like to donate this to the Dutch Foundation for Literature. Don't forget where we come from. I found it in old Cairo at a market called Khan el-Khalili, and they have a bunch of them. This one's a menu selling falafel sandwiches. So it's interesting seeing what you're talking about in digital publishing, and all the bells and whistles and the ability to highlight a certain passage and tweet it and whatnot, but the reality is that for emerging economies, e-publishing is quite simply putting out a facsimile of the image. It's about making the content available. We're not

at the stage where the bells and whistles are part of it. This works for us and against us, unfortunately.

So I'll just give you a quick overview of who we are. We started Kotobarabia in 2005 and our mission was to distribute Arabic in Arabic. Not translations and nothing else, because we felt: why should we start supplying translations for works that the locals which it was intended for have not had an opportunity to read? Part of our motivation for starting Kotobarabia was that we did a study to see what the average distribution in Egypt was and we discovered that the average distribution in Egypt is five kilometres from the physical publishing house. In other words, what people could carry on their backs. So now with the internet you can be everywhere and do everything, so initially – because I'm in it for the money – we played the classic entrepreneur trick and the trick was very simple. We were going to open up an Amazon and it was going to be individual sales, so I'll sell you two books and I'll sell you three books, and of the estimated forty million Arabs online – presumably literate, we didn't realize that you don't need to read pictures – the idea was that with forty million Arabs, if we sold each Arab three books a year I could buy an island in Tahiti. It didn't quite work out like that and we had to switch our model entirely. We started to do a subscription-based model. This is something that I think for a non-fiction conference holds a lot of relevance, because what we did was we aggregated a vast amount of Arabic content. We have two collections, one is about 3,000 books and the other is about 4,500 books, that we sell to universities and libraries, and up until Tuesday we were completely self-funded, we never took any money or anything like that. I say Tuesday because then the revolution started and I might need to ask for money, Richard. So we'll see what we can do.

Another interesting fact is that despite there being 320 million Arabs, our biggest market is actually the US. And there are some obvious reasons for that. One, US academic institutes tend to have a lot of funding. Two, there's the whole nefarious history that's going on between the US and the Arab world, in which there is a huge interest in the US to understand where Arabs are coming from, what they're thinking, what's going on in their minds, and what better way to understand that than to read their books and get that sense from there? Our subscribers are the big academic institutes, the Harvards and Yales and Stanfords and Georgetowns and... Not Rochester though. We need to talk. So this is what we do. For the Dutch industry there is an opportunity there, to aggregate especially the non-fiction and offer it on a subscription-based model to institutes and so on, to the reading community. There is that opportunity. It

requires you all to work together. You all seem pretty amicable so it might work. So it's a thought.

Now I'd like to completely shift gears for a minute and talk about the state of Arab publishing, just very quickly. The Arab publishing industry, if you take a look at where we're at today, is quite comparable to the UK publishing industry of the 1860s. And I mean this very seriously. In other comments I was trying to be funny, but this I'm actually quite serious about. The reason why is because we have no books-in-print catalogue. And the reason why I've put us at the 1860s is because it was around 1867-8 when the first books-in-print catalogue in the UK emerged. This is the fundamental step in emerging economies in order to bring an emerging economy's publishing industry from a developing industry into a modern industry. It's not really the standards, it's not ISBN compliance, it's not even developing standards like BIC Standard or BISAC or NUR. By the way, on a side note, I was at a conference and I asked people if they knew what e-pub was, and the response was: a virtual place to have a virtual beer. Which suits the Arab culture quite well.

The other element of the Arab publishing industry that's interesting is censorship. I know that in the West particularly, censorship is quite strongly condemned, but you have to look at censorship in emerging economies from a different perspective. It's not always fair to judge the censors from the same perspective that you would judge your own country's censors, especially when looking at European history and US history, where censorship was part of the culture less than a hundred years ago. You have to understand that when censorship occurs in the Middle East there's three kinds. There's state censorship, in which the government is trying to prevent certain ideas from becoming popular, and then there's self-censorship, which is: I know that this is going to get me into trouble, so I'm not going to write it. But then there's also another kind of censorship, which is just a censorship based on culture and not understanding that this is wrong. One example I'll give is that we type our books because there's no OCR [optical character recognition]. So there was a book about Egypt in, I forget what year, 1967 I think, or '68, in which the author went through all the headlines and said that this has an effect on modern-day Egypt. And one of the headlines is about the effigy of the Virgin Mary appearing. So because typists are typing away really fast, sometimes they'll skip a line and not really realize that they've skipped a line, but this particular typist had skipped three pages. When we looked at the three pages skipped, it was about the effigy of the Virgin Mary, and when we called him in to see what had happened, his response was very

innocent and very much like he'd done something good: 'Well it's just not true, so I didn't include it.' I mean, there's an element of: how do you... You can't get angry, you have to educate, and the way you educate is by opening the market, the way you educate is through the internet, the way you educate is through throwing up examples, it's through engaging, and one of the things I really hope to see from this conference is exactly that. The Arab market, but let's expand this to emerging economies in general, which include in many ways the Chinese market, the Indian market and so on, is billions of people, and if you're looking for a market to engage in, instead of fighting each other for the piece of the pie that's here, if you start looking at these emerging economies and looking for creative ways to engage with them, which is what the internet offers, in a sense that has never been allowed before, you are opening up a world of millions of people who could be potential customers, could be potential content providers, could be a community that will enrich your own writing and way of thinking.

The concept of last-mile licensing I think is a really important thing that needs to be taken into account when looking at how to engage these emerging economies. I don't have time to go into too many examples of what I think should be done, but last-mile licensing is essentially saying: here's the content and as long as you respect certain parameters that I've set – and you're free to set those parameters as you wish – then it's up to you, the people on the ground, to make the market. It's up to the people on the ground to get the content into the reader's hands, and that is the way to engage the economy. I get very frustrated sometimes in the UK and in the US, where often the barrier to dealing with our content is the lack of an ISBN. The fact that there's not a standard number should not be a barrier to engaging. So that's what I would like you to all think about.

The other thing, which I would like to end on, is that, as most of you know, Egypt and Tunisia are in a state of turmoil, we have a state of turmoil in Yemen now, Syria is very afraid, Lebanon is having issues. This is a stage of change. You know, when people say: where were you when Kennedy was shot? Well I was just an idea then, but people always remember that, and we should all always remember that in this time we were at this conference. The point that I'm trying to make is that one of the first things Tunisia did, and they don't even have a new government in place, is that they removed the agency that censors. So they effectively shut down censorship. That's the first thing they did. They opened the doors to foreign imports, and they opened the doors for local writers to write what they want. They started

printing books that had previously been censored. This is a massive step forward and hopefully we will see this replicated in the rest of the Arab world. The other issue is that with what's going on in the Middle East, we're also seeing an opportunity to build a publishing industry anew in this particular area. I just kind of wanted to put that into your perspective. The Western publishing industry has a lot of issues that are legacy issues. I learned one Dutch word yesterday talking to the philosopher: *openbaring* [revelation]. The Apocalypse. Yes, it's one thing I'll take away. If the Apocalypse were to occur and only publishers were to survive, how would you rebuild the industry? That's something I would like to know. Anyway, thank you very much.

**Maarten Asscher** - I would like to go on for ten or fifteen minutes, then we'll have our coffee, I promise, but it would be a pity to lose the momentum that's been building up in these three presentations. It's clear from what's happening in the Arab world that in the digital era, the internet and iPhones and mobile phones can liberate people, can forge channels of information exchange and communication that are vital to a free society. But how can we use this web, this interconnectedness to promote the quality of ideas? How, once Tunisia is open to the rest of the world, can we make sure that they're not only going to publish the trash of the West but also the quality non-fiction? This I think is a very relevant question and I would like to ask Chad to contribute his view, on the basis of his experience in a very free country where a lot of trash is being published. Perhaps Nicky could do the same from her translator's perspective and then we can refer to Ramy and perhaps take a few questions before we go in to coffee. Chad.

**Chad Post** - Well that is kind of complicated. One of the things in America is that we have so much trash. It's a very commercial, capitalist, run by the market, it's a very market-driven book economy. So the thing that's most important for us is the funding aspect, which Nicky mentioned as well, which is that funding allows you to escape those constraints and be able to do something that may not be immediately successful and seem viable, but that in the long term does have a much larger impact on society. So in a situation where you have that openness, rather than allowing it to be just market-driven, which will tend towards trash, for a variety of reasons – and Americans are really good at exporting shit; we do that very, very well – if you have the funding and you have the idea that this place can exist to produce good ideas, that may not be commercially successful but can survive, then I think that's probably

the most important step towards it, to create that space, because otherwise I think that space gets crowded out by the swarms of voices, and Stieg Larsson.

**Maarten Asscher** - Nicky, you've spoken about the difficulty of convincing people they should accept quality as a challenge for their business. Haven't you been able to use the Jung Chang factor? There was a book out of nowhere, from a Western perspective, that sold millions and millions and millions of copies. Where are the daughters and the granddaughters of Jung Chang on the market? Stieg Larsson meant a lot for the Scandinavian thriller; why didn't Jung Chang produce lots of successful Chinese translations on the English market?

**Nicky Harman** - I think probably because the book itself was by way of a one-off. It was a family biography. There's a limit to how many family biographies you can write.

**Maarten Asscher** - Not in China, not in China.

**Nicky Harman** - There's not a limit to how many you can write, but there's a limit to how many people will buy. But that is an interesting example, because the agent who did most to promote *Wild Swans* in English, a man called Toby Eady, someone a lot of people here will be familiar with, has spent many years studying how to market, how to produce, how to get these kinds of quality non-fiction books accepted and how to market them after. A very good example of how he's succeeded is a little book by a Chinese writer and broadcaster called Yu Dan, on Confucianism for the modern age. It doesn't sound a likely bestseller, but Toby put a huge amount of work into finding a publisher, getting it translated by Esther Tyldesley and that was only the beginning. He then, and I have this on good authority, although I haven't met Yu Dan myself, he coached her. On several visits to China he coached her on exactly what she had to do once the book was out. And so he brought her over. She'd had to improve her English, because sadly one of the prerequisites for marketing your book in the UK is that you've got to be able to speak good enough English to do radio interviews. He then toured her around England and the book has been not such a runaway success as *Wild Swans* but a modest success on a very unlikely topic. So my belief is that it's marketing, marketing and marketing. Another very, very high quality non-fiction book which I translated is this one [Cao Jinqing, *China Along the Yellow River*]. Don't be put off by the sludge-coloured cover. It's a wonderful book which falls into the category of sociology but in fact is a very lyrical description of the Chinese countryside in the 1990s. It's a beautiful book. It bombed. It was published as an academic book; it's now a print-on-demand title for paperback. No marketing

has been done apart from marketing which I did myself. I organized a launch myself at a bookshop in London. It's sold probably under three hundred copies and because it's print-on-demand I can't get the copyright back, because it's never 'out of print'. If I could get it back I'd put it on the web for free, because I want more people to read it. There is a fantastic amount of quality non-fiction in China and gradually this will come out, but the key is in marketing.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay. Ramy. Marketing, marketing, marketing. There are eighty million people in Egypt, of whom one fifth have access to internet. Once the situation there has normalized, is that a market that you could live on as a publisher?

**Ramy Habeeb** - Er. That *I* could live on? I have very expensive taste. I think *one* could live on it. The truth is it's not just about Egypt. The truth is there is one Arabic, much in the way that you have Irish English and British English, which has expressions that to me make no sense but I can understand the language and I can communicate with them. It's the same in Arabic. So you're looking at a market of 320 million people. So yes, you could live off that market. The issues that plague the Arab market are more issues like distribution, which is a big problem in the Arab market. There are no wholesalers; there's no central distribution. And then you have devices, which are e-pub dependent, and Arabic isn't e-pub friendly. But I am talking with people like Sony and Samsung. Unfortunately, what we're seeing in the Arab world is that instead of dealing with the nuts and bolts of the publishing industry, like a books-in-print catalogue and issuing standards, people are seduced by the bells and whistles of e-publishing.

**Maarten Asscher** - If I may interrupt with a question. Would it be possible to go from 1860, as you said, to 2011 without going through all the years in between, to skip the long history and make it into a real digital revolution?

**Ramy Habeeb** - No. You could do it in dog years. But no, I think you'd still need to put in about five to eight years.

**Maarten Asscher** - Because so many people have mobile phones in the Middle East.

**Ramy Habeeb** - We're experiencing the same problems that are in the West in terms of abundance, just for different reasons. We don't have the problem of abundance but we have

the same issues of discoverability. And the fact of the matter is that I would say any publishing industry except possibly the US, German and Japanese industries lives off of subsidiary rights trading. That's a huge part of it. The Americans have the luxury of just being huge, and the Germans are just unsociable and the Japanese people live in their own world. But even still you see with Japan there's a lot of exports, especially in the Manga markets.

**Chad Post** - May I ask you a question? I know we talked about this before, the readership problems in Egypt, that people don't typically read books and if they do it's more you read the Koran or you read a newspaper, or you read for practical reasons. Which would seem to be a huge obstacle to surviving as a publishing house, because you have that readership problem. If the 1860-2011 period in UK publishing helped develop that sort of readership and that sort of market, what's the one thing that you'd have to do in Egypt or in the Arabic world to make that feasible, to help increase the readership and create readers?

**Ramy Habeeb** - I think it's a multi-pronged attack and I also think, by the way, that this actually applies to several emerging economies not just to the Arab world. Number one it's about a books-in-print catalogue because one of the things that we did in a study was we saw that it's not just about a lack of distribution. It's that people want to read but they're not finding the books they want to find and by the same token we know that those books are available. So it's about making it available to bookstores, it's about making it available to the individual consumer. This is a major part of what's needed. But the other thing that's needed is to popularize reading again. The Arab world did have several enlightened eras, but now we're in the era of Koran-or-newspaper and you need to popularize it. I don't think that's necessarily hard, because like any other culture we're a story-based culture, we love a great story.

**Maarten Asscher** - Peter.

**Peter Collingridge** - Just picking up on that. It's the opportunistic response to what you've said, but both in terms of the need to popularize writing and the collapse of censorship: is there an opportunity for taking advantage of the instantaneous nature of digital publishing for example, or web-based publishing, to create an immediate history of what's happened in Tunisia and Egypt and to create a piece of narrative non-fiction about what's been happening there, aimed at the popular reader, to say: 'This is what the country's been going through'? Or is that...

**Ramy Habeeb** - Yes, absolutely. I think that's a brilliant idea and I didn't actually think of it but I think that's an amazing idea, because you could conceivably go around and collect cell-phone videos and cell-phone pictures and get people to write little bits of blurbs on what their experience was, or to do audios and compile it into a book that is, well, instant, exactly. I would love to work on a project like that. That would be wonderful.

**Peter Collingridge** - And do you think that would find an audience?

**Ramy Habeeb** - You know, what would be interesting for a project like that would be to have it as an iPhone app, for example, and have it for free in the Arab world, in Arabic, but sell it in other languages. Then put fifty percent of the proceeds towards rebuilding, or towards culture, or towards translation, or something meaningful that is needed right now. It's a great idea. We should talk.

**Maarten Asscher** - One final question before we go in to coffee.

**Martien de Vletter** - I have a very practical question. I've tried to... First of all, how do you actually subscribe to your database? Do you send a message? I tried to do it just now, but I failed.

**Ramy Habeeb** - Okay, we cut off individual subscriptions just recently, because we're in the process of renewing contracts with a bunch of authors and the truth is that it's so expensive for us to deal with authors that we're moving towards a public-domain, university-only subscription model and we're in that transition. We were looking forward to the Cairo Book Fair to assess how to handle that, because we represent over 1,300 authors and we don't sell nearly enough. We sell about twenty-five percent of the budget that we need just to maintain relations with them. So it's just not making us money, whereas... Because it's unfortunate, but the academic industry is really interested in the classics. They're really interested in the philosophers, and the history books, and the journals from 1880 and they're not so interested in the modern books except for the occasional Alaa al-Aswany, the hits. So because of the market we're looking for a way to put it on hold and focus on the academic outlets to build the company.

**Martien de Vletter** - But then if you say there are these forty million Arabic speakers, you're actually much more focused as a company and as a business model on the academic world outside the region?

**Ramy Habeeb** - Yes. The reality of our situation is that ninety-five percent of our book sales is public domain to institutions. It's unfortunate, because we had really hoped to get individual subscribers and we at one point had traffic in the Middle East of over 15,000 people a day, but there was less than a one percent, not even a one percent, like a 0.1 % conversion in terms of actual subscribers. So it's just not there. We're hoping with the Galaxy and the iPad and the Kindle that all that will change, but it's not on the web for us.

**Martien de Vletter** - But then as an institution, if I have a subscription, I buy several books. What is the format that I get it in?

**Ramy Habeeb** - You'll get it as a platform that you access via the web.

**Martien de Vletter** - So you don't actually get the PDF of the book.

**Ramy Habeeb** - No, you're looking at a PDF, but you're looking at an online PDF. And we use the institutional wholesalers to help sell. So I mean people like Ebsco and East View and InfoTrac.

**Martien de Vletter** - So you aren't really in contact directly with the end customer.

**Ramy Habeeb** - Well, I do go to library conferences, so I am in contact in that sense, but the contact that I'm with is the purchasing librarian, not necessarily the reader. This was just a hard decision we had to make to survive, unfortunately.

**Martien de Vletter** - I understand, yes.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay. I would like to finish here for the moment, and I promised you coffee so let's see each other back again in twenty-five minutes and thanks very much to Chad and Nicky and Ramy.

**Saturday 11.45 am - 1 pm**

**Discussion**

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay, welcome to our final session, which in the last hour and a quarter of our conference is intended to try and recap the main issues, or some of the main issues that we discussed. Inevitably we will also turn back to our pre-coffee discussion, but we would very much like also to pay attention to some of the things that remain from yesterday's programme. And I would like to go back to our first session yesterday morning and start again with Sara Lloyd. One of the things I picked up yesterday much more clearly than ever before in thinking about and reading about these subjects is the very clear divide between what has been called the facsimile e-book market on the one hand and on the other hand the enhanced digital products. For the Dutch market it would be very interesting to start with a question about this almost already traditional e-book. As we have discussed, in England everything is happening eighteen months later than in the US and in the Netherlands perhaps everything is happening another eighteen months later than in the UK, and we are presently on the brink, as everybody feels it, of the breakthrough of the facsimile e-book here. So reprogram your mind, please, to our slow development, but I would very much like to know from Sara what she sees as the main driver or the main obstacle in the development of this fully-fledged e-book market. You have chosen 2014 as a horizon for your prediction, saying that it will be thirty-six percent of the total revenue by that year. What are the crucial factors that are at stake? Is that the gadgets, is that the number of titles available, or is it even more difficult to name?

**Sara Lloyd** - I think it's very simple. The key drivers are: a coming together of the key channels concentrating and focusing on that market, that is Amazon, Apple and Google; the devices becoming mainstream and being marketed very heavily and becoming something that doesn't seem an oddity from outer space; and the publishers making the catalogue available, because if there's not enough breadth of choice in the catalogue of digital books, then generally that will be a stumbling block to the market taking off. Around all of those three as well is a consumer perception, but the consumer perception is driven by those three elements, so I think those are the things that need to happen and they will happen very soon. The catalogue one is the one that's under these guys' control; the other two are not under their control and will happen to them. Why I look to 2014 is in a way just... It's a publishing

modelling thing. We used to do five-year forecasts; we now only do three-year forecasts. In digital I revise my forecast once every quarter.

**Maarten Asscher** - Could the scale of the market also be an unknown factor? There are no examples yet of language markets of the size of the Dutch market that have become fully adapted to digital products.

**Sara Lloyd** - Yes. I think that maybe has something to do with the channels as well, one of the themes I was talking about yesterday being the globalization caused by the internet but also caused by the nature of those three main channels, which are very global companies. So their focus is on large swathes of territories. The US is the obvious first one for them to start in, because it's a huge territory all with one language and kind of one set of laws, with various differentiations. The UK is then the next biggest market, because although the actual local market is relatively small it has a big export market in English. So it's the language thing which is driving that again. Other parts of Europe are divided by language and there's more differentiation in local laws, VAT etcetera, so I think yes, that is an obstacle for the channels in breaking into those places, and because everything tends to follow the channels in whatever they're focused on, that's why they're coming round to it as the third spoke in their own strategies.

**Maarten Asscher** - Thanks. I would like to switch to Harry Blom, who yesterday approached the relationship between the facsimile e-book and the printed book in an original way, saying that perhaps the printed book would become a derivative of the e-book. Could you explain that a little further for us please, how you view this possible development?

**Harry Blom** - Yes, I think it has to do with some value that is in the printed book that doesn't translate into the e-book. The tangible gift value, for instance, and having it on your shelf so people can see when they come into the room: ah, this is your interest; this is the kind of book you like; this is the book I wrote. Sometimes also a signed book by the author can have a lot of value for some people, who think: oh, this is really coming straight from the source. That too is something that doesn't translate into the electronic world. So I think yes, for searchability, usability, speed, access, the electronic version is superior, but there's still remaining value in the print version for which there is a market. Don't forget about the print book.

**Maarten Asscher** - There is of course the phenomenon of printing on demand, but that doesn't seem to expand beyond the experimental stages. How do you perceive that?

**Harry Blom** - Well, almost eighty percent of the books that we publish are published as printing on demand. Where I do sometimes see problems is with the quality. Sometimes digital printing goes too fast and then the ink isn't spread out nicely over the pages. And with the hardcover... We call it smiling books; if the glue dries out too fast the hardbound starts to bend. But I think here we have to look to the printing industry, because they are fiercely competing for business. If you have a superior printing machine, sometimes costing millions of dollars or euros, you can get a lot of business. I've seen examples of full-colour books digitally printed and I couldn't tell whether it was digitally printed or offset, and I think this is developing further.

**Maarten Asscher** - Wouldn't that be the ideal model in a way? That you have a sort of repository of digital files that can be downloaded, that can be sold across borders, and that can also be bought as a printed book? What's keeping this vision from being realized?

**Harry Blom** - I think at the moment it's the number of vendors that can handle the volume and the speed that publishers want.

**Maarten Asscher** - By vendors you mean the printers?

**Harry Blom** - The print vendors. The printers. Because ideally, indeed, you order a book online and you want the print version and then the next door neighbour starts to print it so you have it the same day, right? If you have enough printers all over town... It could be in a bookshop, it could be a new role for a bookshop, so then you could pick it up in the local bookshop, you don't have to wait for the shipping. But at the moment we globally use about three or four big printing vendors and we feel that's too slow. We're waiting for more printers that can do a better job.

**Maarten Asscher** - It could also be a technology and a market approach that has a very low threshold for authors and for new entrepreneurs to enter the market.

**Harry Blom** - Yes, that's right. That could be a threat to publishers as well.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay, but this is all talking about the old-fashioned facsimile e-book that still has a glorious future in front of it, I'm sure of that, and I would like to ask Grégory Martin, from Denoël in France, for his view of the technological issues and the commercial issues that are at stake versus the cultural values for which we are in this profession. How is the balance in France in your view?

**Grégory Martin** - Oh, as a traditional publisher I only deal with the content of printed books and what struck me in what I have heard since yesterday is that we discuss a lot about the content of e-books, but we question ourselves as to what we should give to the tablets, how to feed the beast, in a way. Should we give it organic food, fat food or diet food? I believe in the field of contents we must keep in mind why we are feeding the beast. Why are we working to give Apple some content for its new devices? Because when we talk about e-books, in fact we are talking about devices. We don't talk about our job, we talk about how Steve Jobs is earning money. In fact yesterday and today it was as if Steve Jobs was behind the curtains, listening to us speaking of his world. And why are we publishing? We are publishing because we want to give people ideas, we are publishing to give people tools to struggle for democracy, like in Egypt or Tunisia for instance. How can we adapt to the e-book reality in that field? I believe that question remains, because we don't talk to the same people in the printed world and in the digital world. In fact I read this morning in the newspaper that only two billion people have access to the internet. It's a lot. But there are six billion people in the world, and if we compare that to the rate of literacy, of people able to read, it's a big preoccupation, because if there were only two out of six people able to read it would be a tragedy for the publishing industry. So the low rate of people having access to the internet may be of preoccupation first for us in the field of content-based, before discussing what the content is about. My point is that e-books are becoming a luxury good, in a way, because you need money to get the device, you need money to get access to the internet and you need money to learn how to use these devices, because with a printed book you only need to know how to read but to read e-books you know how to use the tools. It's more expensive. I make a parallel between what we are describing as e-book content and the luxury goods world. Being French I know perfectly well how it functions. We have Vuitton, we have Chanel, Yves Saint Laurent in France. We are the new Vuitton in this room in fact, because we are looking at how to sell directly what we produce. We are thinking of marvellous content of very high quality and we want to control everything, just like Chanel, just like Vuitton. They are a very strong economic model, and because of the costs, because of the content, because of that economic

model, I think e-book publishing is becoming a luxury-goods industry. And my point is to join with what Harry had to say in that we mustn't forget the printed book. Maybe as a derivative, maybe as a first edition, but it must be the other leg on which we stand. Thanks.

**Maarten Asscher** - Thank you very much. Richard, would you...

**Richard Nash** - I suspect that the question I'm going to ask, Ramy might be able to ask in a more sophisticated or personal way, but my impression in terms of the reality of those four billion people is that in the next ten years the odds that they will get access to a printed-book distribution and retail infrastructure is orders of magnitude less likely than that they will get access to the internet, and that the Vuitton, the LVMH model is a model that more accurately describes the future of print than the future of digital. Because yes, right now a tablet is five hundred dollars, but that's probably not going to be the device that penetrates the developing world. As I've seen people reporting from South America and Africa, what you see is a kind of a very Creole form of technology, a super-cheap e-ink, crappy laptop/netbook-driven adoption, a three-netbooks-per-village, one-internet-connection style of distribution, and in that situation it's far more likely that they're going to get access to text than through physical print books arriving in the Amazon or in the Niger Delta.

**Maarten Asscher** - Ramy?

**Ramy Habeeb** - Also I think that much like with Henry and the whole debate about 'an app or a book, what do we call it?', the definition will get a bit wider, and I actually completely agree with what Richard just said but I also think that there's a very strong element here that books will be treated like – to simplify the example – like clothes, where you get the Marks & Spencer cheap shoes and you get the high-end... With my expensive taste I should know the names of them. Italian leather suede somethings. I think that for publishers to survive this whole 'e-book slash print world, what are we going to do, how are we going to approach it?' you need to offer a variety of options, the interactive e-book versus the facsimile version just for distribution purposes, and that this diversification is what's going to strengthen you in the market. Whether it's that you specialize in only the high-end e-books or not. Look at Penguin Classics, which I think is a good example in the print book. You can get a cheap Gutenberg Project version of the book, but a lot of people still buy the Penguin Classics, because it's the high-end version of it. But you still have the low end and so you're catering to everyone.

**Maarten Asscher** - Sara.

**Sara Lloyd** - Yes I just wanted to add that if you talk to publishers or distributors in India or in Africa in particular, they're very excited by mobile, for example, which we're not particularly in the UK. Because every farmer in Africa has a mobile phone. They don't have a laptop or a connection in that way but they have the mobile, which is connected because it's vital to their livelihood. In fact I heard a statistic somewhere, I won't get it completely accurate, but that farmers in Africa generally spend something like seventy percent of their income on their mobile phone because it's so key to their existence. Now the physical infrastructure doesn't exist to get books to them, but we can get content to them through the mobile, so I think my view of this is completely the polar opposite to what Grégory just said, and that actually this could be a vital way to allow people to reach content who can't get it in physical form. Indian publishers and Indian distributors feel very much that the physical infrastructure still hasn't sorted itself out for distribution in India, and they feel they're going to leapfrog the whole of the physical process and go straight to digital, and that that will actually really contribute to the literacy levels and so on in that country. So I think it's very important to remember that we're not just talking about us, we're talking about the whole world, and countries that exist with very different infrastructures and possibilities than ours.

**Maarten Asscher** - Ed Nawotka, please.

**Edward Nawotka** - Sara touched on something I was going to say. I actually agree with some of what Grégory's saying, which is that you do have to have quite a bit of money. But it's interesting, because different parts of the world have different outcomes. There's a company in Canada called Wattpad, and they offer free e-book downloads. Their biggest growth in the past year has been in Vietnam and it works on feature phones. They use Java to serve up free e-books. I think you're going to see the full range of the market but at the same time, in print, if you look at a market like Brazil, which is an extremely wealthy country respectively, but about forty percent of their book business is door-to-door sales, through companies like Avon. An iPad in Brazil costs 1,000 dollars for just the basic model and they only have about 2,000 e-books in Portuguese available. I think we have different markets moving at different paces that are filling different cultural niches. Just to go to that point about books as souvenirs, one of the best statistics I've heard recently came out of the Book Industry Study Group, and in Japan, out of the top ten bestselling books last year, five of them were cell-phone novels,

published on cell phones. Those books were bestselling cell-phone novels, they were then published in print, and each of those five novels then sold over a million copies in print, after having sold several million copies as cell-phone novels. They were essentially souvenirs of the reading experience for these people. Mind you, they're never twenty-five dollar books. So I just think it's interesting how diverse our global culture is, actually, using those three different examples.

**Ramy Habeeb** - That was the point that I was making about last-mile licensing, which I think is really important, which is that when you are doing subsidiary rights trading you really need to trust your local partner. Just because you have an amazing iPad app, well that's not going to work in Brazil, based on your examples, but it doesn't mean that you don't have the ability to still sell the subsidiary rights.

**Maarten Asscher** - Nicky.

**Nicky Harman** - Putting a Chinese perspective on it, in China books are cheap, but on the other hand downloads from the web are free and very popular. You get entire books which can be downloaded from various websites for free – legitimately, that's not talking about the pirated versions, so they're there with the publisher's consent. So the two run alongside each other and this runs across the age groups, it's not just young people, it's not just in towns it's also in the countryside. Authors have followed up by self-publishing on the web, serious academics have followed up by hosting a website where quite serious articles can be downloaded for free. Okay, maybe they get up the noses of the authorities and that website may be closed down, but it will be opened up again, so the internet in China is a very important platform. It doesn't stop books being sold, but it's a very important adjunct.

**Maarten Asscher** - Are authors and publishers making money in a traditional way on the Chinese book market, or is the availability of free downloads and rampant piracy frustrating this?

**Nicky Harman** - Can I pass that over to Lisa, who knows much more about it than I do?

**Lisa Liping Zhang** - Well, the print-book markets are there. In China recently there was a discussion by the researchers of the publishing industry. They divide the e-book into three categories. There's e-book 1.0, which is to put the traditional content, already published, into

e-book format, and then the second category is e-book 2.0, that's what Shanda has been doing, writing online and reading online, and then the third one is e-book 3.0, like *The Solar System*, with very complex content. So all this is happening and yet traditional publishing in China is also increasing, with piracy or not. I think that overall the pie is growing. Nowadays people with small incomes start to buy more books. Maybe in the past they'd buy only one book a month, now with more choices they can buy two books in a month.

**Maarten Asscher** - Henry.

**Henry Volans** - Just on China. The thing to bear in mind about China from a publisher's perspective is that we can't really sell physical books in there either, other than the few we manage to semi-officially get in through Hong Kong. It's a challenging digital book market, but it's also a very challenging print market. And in terms of international reach, we've already sold e-books in somewhere between 140 and 160 different countries, which is thirty or forty more than we've ever sold in print. So there's absolutely no question that you get wider distribution through digital and many of those countries have no supply chain whatsoever, no physical... And one last thing, sorry that I'm moving around a bit but so many things have just opened out: this question of facsimile e-book to whatever's at the other end of the scale. I actually think it's a sliding scale and there will be a blending of things in between. Some of the constraints so far are artificially imposed because of rights, and so one of my biggest frustrations in recent years is arguing over how you word rights clauses for digital things, because often contracts say that we have to do the complete verbatim text, which from my point of view is nothing other than a disincentive to innovation on the part of agents. There needs to be more trust from authors and agents, and if there is more trust in what publishers do, they will in turn make more money, because we will do better because we'll be allowed to innovate.

**Maarten Asscher** - Grégory. Are you more-or-less satisfied? Can you live with the response that your remarks have occasioned?

**Grégory Martin** - I am satisfied to have such answers, but I remain convinced that there is a cost gap here, between the e-book and the printed book, because not only of the cost of the devices, not only the cost of the internet access, not only the cost of the electricity and so on but also the cost of the educational aspect, to learn how to use an e-book. We all learn how to read in printed books, it's not so difficult to learn how to turn the pages. It's far more difficult

to understand how to download, to put it on your device, to manage the information you get through e-books. My point is that already the pattern is that there's a widening gap, because of the physical cost, money, because of the educational cost, between those who can read on paper and those who can't because they're unable to.

**Maarten Asscher** - Henry and then Angus please.

**Henry Volans** - Well just very quickly on that, I sort of agree and disagree. I'm not delighted by the fact that the iPad presents a five-hundred-plus-pound cost barrier to entry to people and any elitist undertones I don't like. I think things like the Kindle are basically intuitive, and the age group that uses Kindles and Sony Readers is not the young technology-using audience, so I really think that is almost not an issue. Round the edges perhaps slightly. But I think really we're very near the point where technology is very, very simple and almost as intuitive as the book.

**Sara Lloyd** - Can I answer that as well, because I imagine that probably this year you'll see free e-readers, where people if they buy enough books will get the reader subsidized on some sort of subscription level.

**Maarten Asscher** - That already exists on the Dutch market.

**Grégory Martin** - There remains the problem of providing the internet. If we're not getting sufficient big cables into Africa, then maybe through satellites. It remains the fact that you have to deal with physical problems.

**Sara Lloyd** - With the Africa example, I was talking about this earlier with the mobile thing. The fact is that people do have mobiles and they have wireless. The reason that they can't use the other types of devices is because they can't lay the cables, for various infrastructural reasons and because they get ripped up. So actually they've leapfrogged all of that issue, it's all about mobile there and wireless.

**Maarten Asscher** - Angus.

**Angus Phillips** - I wanted to make a few points as an author. Recently publishers have said to me, well one of the things we can do for authors is we can protect your IP and we can actually control what's happening with your books, so that's an added value that the publisher can

provide for an author. But I've got a Google alert on one of my books, which shows me whenever it appears, and it appears on Torrent quite regularly, on free file-sharing sites quite regularly. I had an e-mail from a friend in India who said: do you know your book is freely available on this website? I contacted my publisher and they have tried to get it taken down, but they get put up again pretty well immediately, even if the publisher does serve a notice. There's a lot of freely available content out there. I was very impressed in Moscow by people reading on the metro on Kindle-like devices (I'm not sure exactly which one is most popular there) and I asked the students at the university: where do the books come from? And they said they're always free. So people there are reading free content and this is freely available. For authors this is a big worry about what's going to happen in the future with digital content.

**Maarten Asscher** - But that's not any different from the printed era, of course. In India and in China and behind the Iron Curtain there were lots of books published either without permission or with a very, very tiny fee for the author and the rights holder.

**Angus Phillips** - Sure, but with the culture of music – again, I asked my students: do you pay for your music? Some of them do use iTunes, but most of them will get it for free. If that culture spreads to everywhere with digital content, then as Richard was saying yesterday, the price is going to be driven down to zero eventually. At our university we're looking at potentially giving every student a tablet-type computer and we'll have licenses with publishers, so they'll get the content onto that tablet device, which will mean: what do we do with the physical books in the library? Is that just going to be shunted out to a warehouse somewhere and that space freed up? Economic factors I think are really going to drive the digital future in lots of different areas.

**Maarten Asscher** - Peter.

**Peter Collingridge** - Are your e-books available legally in Russia?

**Angus Phillips** - I doubt it.

**Peter Collingridge** - I spent all of 2009 working on a really big project where I got to meet some of the global heads of anti-piracy firms, the people that track the sort of things that you're getting e-mails about, talking about what can be done to counter piracy, and to a man they said: really what we do is useless. The only thing that you can do that's effective is make

your content available, make it compelling, make it available widely on as many devices as possible and put it at a sensible price, and that's the only way that you can counter piracy. There's always the analogue problem. Somebody can always go into a bookshop, photograph your pages, OCR it and put it up on the web. There's always a piracy thing. Harry Potter was translated into German in forty-eight hours from the English edition being published. I think Sara touched on this yesterday in a very, very interesting point. The idea of globally synchronized publication is in crisis now. It's a very big factor, but I think that... I was in Russia and all of these publishers were addressing exactly the same questions and there are some interesting new business models emerging, like Shanda. There's something called bookmate.ru, which is a browser-based subscription service like Spotify, and people are paying for it. They've got 100,000 subscribers paying three dollars a month for it at the moment. But if your stuff's not available you're going to get pirated. That's why piracy exists. The fact that your students, or the students you were talking to, buy music, some of them buy music, is because iTunes filled the gap. Trust me, I had to give up piracy as a new year's resolution two years ago because I didn't think it was cool, but you only do it out of frustration. If you can go to the cinema or you can get the new films available, it's a lot easier to do that than steal them.

**Angus Phillips** - But the expectation is that that content's free, for my students, a lot of them are not using iTunes, even though it does exist. The expectation is that you can pass it around for free and that's the danger of digital content in freely available files.

**Maarten Asscher** - Well that proves Richard's point of yesterday, where he said: if the marginal costs of reproduction are zero then the price will be zero. Richard, what is your view on piracy? Is it a subject at all for you?

**Richard Nash** - It's not, really. When I published at Soft Skull I used to be disappointed about how little piracy happened, because it was a sign of lack of demand. If my books weren't being pirated it was because people didn't want them. So as Cory Doctorow famously says, the publishing dilemma is not piracy, it's obscurity. That's obviously not a problem for JK Rowling, but in a certain sense... We've used the 'marketing marketing marketing' phrase a couple of times; in a weird way I sort of feel that to speak of the dangers of piracy is to assume that there is a legitimate market that is being undermined by piracy, and I think that legitimate market is effectively disappearing, incrementally, and that rather than finding ways

to sustain the legitimate market for another three years or five years, it seems to be worth identifying that which people will pay for forever, and focusing our revenue-generating efforts there. You just mentioned the experience of watching a film. I tend to think: well okay then, what is that? That is: people will pay, but not for the content, people are paying to go to a movie theatre along with four hundred other people and have popcorn and be able to talk about it the next day, having already seen the film. It's that experience.

**Peter Collingridge** - I would pay money *not* to go to the cinema.

**Richard Nash** - Conversely there's a wonderful book I just read recently on the history of VCR, of the tape, and it became basically a sociology of the video store. It pointed out that there was a time, maybe for ten years, when at the independent video store, people would spend two hours browsing and talking with one another around the tapes. It became a social space where, effectively, by renting a movie you were paying the video store to be a place where you could talk to other movie buffs about music. It's like when you go to a bar you pay five euro for beer when you could pay one euro at home. You're not actually paying for beer, you're paying for the experience of drinking the beer with friends. So if beer was free, you'd still go to a bar and pay for it. Not everyone...

**Chad Post** - Not his students.

**Richard Nash** - But in a certain sense what we're looking for, I feel, in publishing is: what is the bar?

**Maarten Asscher** - Well the bar is the bookshop, of course. What will replace the bookshop in this philosophy of experience?

**Richard Nash** - I think the chains are completely... I typically curse a lot and I've been very restrained over the course of this conference, but I'm now going to give up and say the chains are fucked. But the independent bookstores I think are in good shape, so long as they convert themselves into literary community centres, creating intimate experiences, perhaps even dating services centred around books. This bookstore that I mentioned in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, has cooking classes, singles nights, they have organic food farm shares delivered to the store, they have knitting circles. There was a famous book published, I don't know how much attention it got outside the United States, but a book called *Bowling Alone* by Robert

Putnam, a Harvard sociologist, about the loss of institutions other than home and work where people could encounter one another, the bowling alley in the United States being an example of that space. In many respects I think the growth of the reading group in the United States is an effort by people to find ways to encounter one another, other than your co-worker and your family, around something that allows you to have a conversation and connect. And it feels to me as if for a certain percentage of the population, I don't know how big that percentage is – like I said we've got seven percent of the US population that wants to write every year and we've got about twelve or fifteen percent that reads ten hours a week or more. – so it's somewhere in that number of people whose social identity can be formed around books. I don't think the question is whether they buy the books or not, the question is just: how do we generate money from that experience? You said yesterday, I think, that there's going to be intermediaries and we're all going to be figuring out ways in which we create that value, but I think the value is fundamentally a social value; it's the conversation around the object.

**Maarten Asscher** - But for me as an author, the question is: who is going to pay me for the plan that I have to write a book? Or who's going to pay me for the manuscript I've just finished? It's very nice for people to have knitting classes in bookshops, but I want to earn a proper income, and that value has to be produced by the chain.

**Chad Post** - I've had the same theory about what could happen with bookstores for a number of years, having worked in independent bookstores for a period before getting into publishing, that they have to adapt and become these community centres, and the problem that seems to be happening that that runs into is that outside of major metropolitan areas it's just not feasible, it just doesn't work, there's not enough interest. People read, but not really in the way that you're talking about, outside of certain areas, so it becomes very limited. As things go more digital, we can see that the independent stores are partnering with Google, and Google – taking your now swearing thing – is fucking the independent book stores pretty good on their little e-book deal. Significantly, it's not going to happen. So they're going to continue to go downhill and there's not a good way to replace that community thing online that I've seen yet. So I feel that physical space means a lot, but I question whether that's really not just idealistic. I want to believe that there can be these independent bookstores that survive that way outside of Greenpoint, but I feel not.

**Edward Nawotka** - And that's a tiny, tiny store. It's all this real estate too. If you're talking about a showcase place that can show off all the books that the publishers in this room produce, like Athenaeum Boekhandel does, to show that off, that space is eroding. It's a big question.

**Maarten Asscher** - Eppo, please.

**Eppo van Nispen tot Sevenaer** - I've got two comments. The first one is to help Angus, and all the people who want to make money. People say it's going to be a free world and content will be free. But we're living now in the old days of 2011, and if you look with the scope of about 2050-2060-2070, we will be much better controlled by governments, by a system that really knows what you're up to, whether it be by chipping your toe, or whatever, your ear, in your head. It will be the Matrix. So there has been talk about a business model – it will be that the instant you think of a book you're already paying for it. I think that it's just a matter of time before free content will be paid for at the prices it will really fetch. But about real live space... I've worked for the last five years of my life getting the library, which is the most boring place on earth, getting it a little bit more popular. And we quite succeeded in that. People tend to forget all the things like libraries, and bookstores, and I think they're going to run up together. There will always be physical places. The first thing, one nice thing about the library is that it's a reliable place, just like the bookstore, and I have much more of a belief in bricks and mortar than a lot of people have. It's just that it's only when you really create a good place and not with the ugly librarian who hates people coming in, but with a nice George-Clooney-like person, because the average client of a library is a woman between forty and sixty who loves to look at George Clooneys instead of an ugly librarian women. You get a space that really interacts. And I think that's really a part of it, because a lot of book traders are in the in-between period of redefining what that space should be and I really believe in authors being paid in twenty years, and I believe there will be bricks and mortar enough and space enough for people.

**Maarten Asscher** - Thank you Eppo.

**Angus Phillips** - An aside on that. We had a very fierce librarian at Oxford University Press and we used to call her Conan the Librarian.

**Maarten Asscher** - Ramy.

**Ramy Habeeb** - Just on the George Clooney comment, but in a different direction, you know the George Clooney model towards filmmaking actually could work for fiction publishers, if not non-fiction publishers, where it's one for them one of us, where you do do that popular big vampire thing that you know is going to be popular with teenage girls, but you also have people like Chad find the obscure gems, and you navigate the two worlds. In terms of how to pay the authors, what we did, or we tried to do, was we said thirty-five percent of all subscriptions went to the authors and then we divided it two ways, where ten percent was automatically divided amongst each author, so that every author got the same amount of money, but the remaining twenty-five percent was divided amongst the books, so if an author had five books as opposed to one, they would earn more money on the subscription. I really think that Chad's model is brilliant and that I need a *New York Times* article as well, because...

**Chad Post** - Because of your expensive taste.

**Ramy Habeeb** - Yes, and because I'd like to get more subscriptions, frankly. Because I do think that we are going to see a multiverse system towards getting our books when we look at the e-books; we're going to see individual sales for the premium print. Here I'm speaking about Europe and North America. In Egypt, in about forty years we'll catch up. Maybe less. I'm a bit pessimistic today... But you'll see a multiverse of how to get the content and that's what publishers really need to do. They need to offer a subscription base, they need to offer a checkout base, so you have a subscription where you can get all the books, but you can also have a subscription that's cheaper only the book expires after a month, or the book expires the minute you're done reading it, because we can measure that. Maybe people will just never read the last page, but you know what I mean. The ideas need to come out of it, where it's individual sales of the enhanced book, and that's where the author's going to get paid.

**Maarten Asscher** - For the author to get paid the publisher has to be discovered. In the age of abundance, which you could also name the age of chaos, this individual publisher with his list should be found by search engines or stumbled upon or whatever. I'd like to refer to Sara please: you said yesterday that for the discoverability of a publisher you have to develop a brand, you have to invest in your brand name as a publisher. So far, in the world as we know it, brand names of publishers are mainly recognized by the retail channels, not by the public, the reading public, with the possible exception of Penguin and perhaps two more. How are

you, with Pan Macmillan, going to invest in a brand name so that people will want to discover your digital projects because they are issued from the Pan Macmillan brand?

**Sara Lloyd** - I'm not going to talk about Pan Macmillan's specific plans, but to talk more generically about publishers and brands, I think we're not talking about necessarily trying to transform existing brands into consumer brands, but we might be talking about creating new consumer brands. They might be website brands, platform brands, they might be brands that one would acquire in a particular space. It might actually be your author brands, or it might be collective sets of author brands. So the brand doesn't have to be the publisher brand, but we need either to leverage existing brands or to create new brands that do speak to the consumer, in order to develop into the kind of space where consumers come as a trusted party for x, y or z. So the example I was giving the other day about going to that particular American publisher who was organizing itself around communities, I think they have then started to create consumer brands that aren't even just about books, they're about topics. So that's just one example of how you might do that. But that requires a long-term vision and long-term investment in consumer categories or consumer niche.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay, thank you. Martien, please.

**Martien de Vletter** - Well that's exactly what we've done with this webshop for architecture books, because I was coming not from the publishing world but from the architecture world. I know all the publishers, but of course a lot of people who buy books on architecture or whatever topic don't know the name of the publisher, and they're not interested in the name of the publisher, so that is a very difficult brand, as you say, to market. And therefore you create a platform for specific topics, which is logical in this perspective, of course, and not every topic would have that, but that's exactly why we tried to do it. So the publisher's name is in the website somewhere, but it is really the brand of the bookstore, or this very specific store, that should become known among architects and so on. And to add to that, I would like to believe that bookshops, even in architecture, will exist in the next decades, but I'm also quite sceptical about it, and not because of the quality of the bookshops and not because we don't want to go to the bookshop, but, as you say, in parts of the world, or even parts of Europe, that are not so connected to Architectura & Natura, which is round the corner here and which is a fantastic architecture bookshop, it is much more difficult. Also because if you are very much into a topic and you search for books on the internet you find so many wonderful books that

you would never ever find browsing in a bookstore, although you will find someone there who can tell you what kind of books they are, but still you can find books on the internet on the south-east of Hungary, which used to be Romania, of 1956-1960 or whatever, so if you're into a topic you can find many things on the internet which you would never find in a bookstore. I'm not saying that bookstores will not exist anymore, but this is a huge thing which the internet offers to you.

**Maarten Asscher** - I'd like to stick to that subject of branding but then switch from the facsimile e-book world to the world of enhanced digital products and apps, and I would like to ask Henry please: what does branding mean for the kind of apps you are developing? *The Solar System* for example. What remains in terms of brand value from this particular project?

**Henry Volans** - I think it's probably best to look at that in the light of all Faber's activity. We're lucky, we're one of the publishers that does have a brand, but even then we wouldn't overstate it. If anything it's a kind of intellectual luxury brand, known and loved by a group of people which we know is finite and you can't rely on. In terms of the successful *Solar System*, I think it's thrilling to have the Faber brand on something so totally different. I love it when people do a slight double take: oh that's Faber that does the poetry and they're doing this successful app. And it works in the context of Faber's other new businesses, like the Faber Academy, which was conceived explicitly as a luxury business – the person who set that up had studied other luxury businesses and has almost done it in that image – right through to the Faber Factory, which is our business offering services of facsimile e-book. So I think it all ties up. If we can have flagship projects that draw attention to what we're doing at one end, it has benefit for the activities of the company at the other.

**Maarten Asscher** - But isn't the fact that *The Solar System* is connected to the Faber & Faber brand also a limitation of its possible market. If the brand were Discovery, or National Geographic, or Disney Studios, wouldn't your market for this particular app be much easier to conquer?

**Henry Volans** - Well one of the things to say is that *The Solar System* is a co-brand between us and Touch Press, who are obviously a very strong brand through *The Elements*, and that was very beneficial. I think one of the very interesting things about the App Store and this whole new world is that it's not necessarily that respectful of traditional brands. We're seeing this great play of traditional brands, *The Economist* Magazines, *The Sunday Times* and *The*

*Times* here, newspaper ones all over, and I think there's a lot of struggling when you're just relying on imposing your brand. You've got the magazines, but then the one Apple really backed from last year was Flipboard, which makes a magazine of the web. Interestingly, there are fascinating brand exercises, like the resurrection of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as an app-building brand in the last fortnight, but there's Disney apps with one-star ratings on the App Store; you won't last long not making the right product. Then of course there are those amazing stories of a fourteen-year-old who made the successful free game to... Who had heard of Rovio or Zynga? So I think basically we're very conscious you can't just sit back and rely on having a brand, and I think it's exciting when you surprise people with your brand doing things with which they might not have associated it not long ago.

**Maarten Asscher** - Sara.

**Sara Lloyd** - That's just made me think of a point, what Henry just said, which is about the fact we're here to talk about quality non-fiction. Thinking outside of our sort of straight text or narrative boxes, and thinking about what quality might look like in a digital product, has done something to enhance the Faber brand. But the primary point was they didn't think: what can we do with our brand? They thought: how can we make something of quality in this new environment? And because the hierarchy is flat in Apple iPad and iPhone etcetera, because all of the placement is editorially led – which I think is a massive benefit of that particular store – quality effectively, quality being in the broadest possible sense the stuff that people appreciate, consumers appreciate, does float to the surface. If that then has a beneficial impact to an existing brand, or you create a new brand out of that, the brand aspect is secondary. There is a small effect where you have an existing brand and people will buy from you rather than from someone else, but it's flatter, because of the quality-leading aspect.

**Maarten Asscher** - But doesn't that also mean that perhaps this focus on brands is more connected to the world of yesterday than to the world of tomorrow? That, say, the *Blair Witch* approach, where you invent something quick and new and unusual, overtakes the whole studio system and becomes an enormous success. Is that not typically our digital age?

**Henry Volans** - I think it's more simply that the brands that are successful are different and are changing more quickly, but when things are successes, the people who come up with them do become brands and people want them to become brands. I think in general it's pretty

widely accepted that brands and branding is only becoming more important and more relevant, it's just that the nature of what they are is changing, and it might fluctuate more.

**Sara Lloyd** - And how they're born.

**Henry Volans** - I think it might be harder to have empires. They're under pressure, some of them.

**Maarten Asscher** - Richard.

**Richard Nash** - In response to both that and I think some of the concerns that both Chad and Ed raised about the bookseller/retailer ecosystem, one of the things that I think we have to be careful with is a problem that's always happened in publishing of the availability heuristic. We talk about the hits because we notice the hits and we can at times run into the danger of over-extrapolating from the things that really worked. Obviously it's critical to learn lessons from things that succeed, because you want more things to succeed, but the *Solar System* approach is not going to solve Chad's Open Letter problem. The App Store, while it may be driven by editorial choice, the odds of Apple's editors picking the Open Letter subscription is pretty close to zero, so... Sorry! I ran, I started a subscription at Soft Skull back in 2006...

**Chad Post** - Actually it's a three percent chance...

**Richard Nash** - So there's going to be hits and you surf on the hits, whether the hit is Harry Potter or *The Elements* or the Chinese lady we were referring to earlier, you know, the million-seller.

**Maarten Asscher** - Jung Chang.

**Richard Nash** - Yes, yes. Those things are going to happen and we surf on them when we can, but what I really try and think about is what happens the other ninety-five percent of the time and what can we build businesses on when we don't have hits? I was thinking, depending on how far the chip goes in our head, short of that happening, and we were talking about this at dinner last night, one of the things I've certainly noticed is that if there's one thing we're spending more money on now, it's on internet connectivity. What drives internet connectivity is the desire to connect with people and we connect with people around culture. We want to talk. Yes, we want to download movies, and we want to download audio, but we

also want to talk about them on an ongoing basis and we text-message about them. The word 'book' appears on Twitter three times a second, because we like having conversations around the stuff that we love. The owners of the pipes, whether they're pipes or wireless bandwidth, want us using that stuff, want us conversing, so one could see a scenario, not necessarily where the government is implanting things in our heads so that they know what we're reading, but that you've got a kind of very, very broad subscription that allows you basically unlimited books where a certain percentage of the revenue is kicked back to the content providers. That therefore completely eliminates the piracy issue, because they don't care whether you're downloading it from a Torrent site or from the publisher. Effectively the kind of legal mechanism required is an authentication method: 'what are they reading?', not 'where did they acquire it from?'

**Peter Collingridge** - Ironically this is the sort of activity that's being proposed by the government. In Britain the outgoing Labour government proposed effectively an ISP tax, where you would pay for access and that would then be used to pay music companies and film companies, under strong lobbying from those industries, which were struggling to find a successful business model for the twenty-first century and were saying well actually the government, taxpayers, should subsidize the loss of revenue from piracy. This was counterintuitive, but in some ways it joined up the dots to what you were saying... I don't know if anybody's read André Schiffrin. Do you know André Schiffrin?

**Maarten Asscher** - *The Business of Books*.

**Peter Collingridge** - Well he's issued a follow-up to that. What's it called? *Words and Money*. In it he makes a very French statement for the future of publishing, the future of culture actually being state funded. He said the only sustainable business model for culture in the age of the internet is through state funding, and it's a terrifying vision, frankly.

**Maarten Asscher** - It's Orwellian. I'd like to ask... Or would you like to make a comment yourself? Chad.

**Chad Post** - There's state funding and there's state funding, to be quite honest. 'How does Open Letter exist as yet?' you asked. New York State and the US government, all the foreign agencies that help pay our translation costs: it's all state funded. For a culture there are very big dangers to that in certain situations and certain political environments, but there's also a

certain protective sense to it, because otherwise, left to the marketplace, we don't exist, quite frankly. We do not. There's no market that will sustain Open Letter. In terms of books. And that's true for Archipelago, that's true for Ugly Duckling, that's sort of what's true for Soft Skull, that's true for a lot of these things that are culturally valuable, so if the state under these sorts of circumstances, where they provide money and they don't provide oversight in terms of your content or things like that, they provide you with the opportunity to exist, can be very positive. I don't think it has to be Orwellian, it doesn't have to go to that extreme, there are other checks and balances.

**Maarten Asscher** - But you just issued a top twenty-five list of the best foreign fiction in translation, and it's interesting to see that there are only two or three titles on that list that are published by bigger publishing houses, and almost all of them are by the Gray Wolves and the Archipelagos etcetera. In quality non-fiction that pattern would be the same I think.

**Chad Post** - Yes, most definitely in terms of translation. There'd be a lot more university presses and the same, well not exactly the same, not Archipelago because they don't do non-fiction either, but people like that.

**Maarten Asscher** - I could imagine an alternative for state funding, which has grave disadvantages which can be further discussed over lunch, an alternative might be a sort of downscaling of quality publishing. Not these giants who once in a while publish a gem, but dedicated community brands, crowd-funded or reader-based subscription models that can preserve the necessary measure of independence.

**Chad Post** - Yeah, I'd love that, that would be a beautiful vision. Absolutely. But to get to that, to overcome the massive capitalist forces on the market in America – I don't see that being possible. It would be like a huge revolution.

**Maarten Asscher** - Not even in a digital era where the accessibility is far greater than having to walk much more than five miles to your bookshop?

**Chad Post** - Yes, I still see it as being a very difficult challenge just based on the overwhelming amount of information that's available, and stuff that's available as entertainment. Forces that are much more powerful and are much more capitalist-driven and profit-driven will make that a very difficult transition. It's beautiful to think, but I don't think

it's possible right now. I think it would take a long transition period to make that work for the presses that you're talking about.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay, Ed.

**Edward Nawotka** - I was just going to say, and let's try to focus specifically on non-fiction, that I think you need to look at a model of what's happened with journals. Because essentially non-fiction is journalism with more depth, writ larger, in different contexts. But if you look at the United States, or let's not even go into that, that's too deep a question, but my point of view as a journalist is that if you look at the model of what happened in the United States with investigative journalism, you're talking about massive media brands that have all but abandoned it. *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times* – they can't afford it. So what was developed was ProPublica. ProPublica was essentially one large organization that hired several dozen investigative journalists to tackle large topics independently, so there was not a political and/or other agenda inherent on them, and those reporters then supplied video, audio, newspaper reports to whatever organizations wanted to then publish it and would pay for it. It's struggling, but it's been going for the past couple of years. That proved to be an interesting publishing model, business model, for that type of difficult non-fiction type of, well, it's journalism in that case. It does offer a self-funded, self-sustainable model, and there may be something there for quality non-fiction publishing. Because the university press model, which does publish a lot of quality non-fiction in translation in the United States is also...

**Maarten Asscher** - State funded.

**Edward Nawotka** - Well, largely state funded but also it's an anaemic and eroding business, because a lot of the university presses have gone towards trying to publish commercial titles. And their mandates have actually gotten further and further away. There are exceptions. Princeton University Press. There are several of them that are doing very good work.

**Maarten Asscher** - A last comment from Richard.

**Richard Nash** - On that point, and it was mentioned yesterday, the integration of the academic library into academic publishing, the University of Michigan, which has one of the largest library systems in the world, has basically absorbed the University of Michigan's

publishing division. The University of Michigan Press is now part of the library system, as is the University of Michigan's scholarly publishing office, which is a publisher of online scholarly journals. So effectively what they've done is rather than demand that the university press pretend it can be supported by market forces, they've acknowledged that rather than basically funding the university press by making the library pay eighty-five dollars for monographs that the press is publishing, they're just going to fold the press into the library operation and treat it as a mission-driven university project. That seems to be working really quite well, at least in the first nine months of operation. I mean, again it's not the answer, but it is an answer in a particular subset of situations.

**Chad Post** - Right, it's slightly different, but that's sort of our set-up in a way. We're not part of a library per se but we're not a separate organization from the university either. In the same way that they're doing at Michigan, we are an efficient part of what the university is doing, for their programmes and for other things, but it ends up back with state funding.

**Maarten Asscher** - Okay, thanks very much. This must more-or-less conclude our discussions after one and a half days. As I promised, there will be no conclusions, but there are still a few remarks to be made at the end of this final Saturday morning session. Richard Nash commented on the attraction of Canongate as a source of inspiration, and he might also have mentioned Faber & Faber. These are publishing imprints that provoke this wonderful urge to belong there, the sexiness of entrepreneurship and initiative and innovative energy. I can subscribe to that, but I would like to open that up to the book trade as a whole, especially the non-fiction publishing community. The book trade as such, apparently, with a few exceptions, has this sexiness, this effect of people wanting to belong there. Otherwise Henry and Marcus wouldn't have made their *Solar System* project under the imprint of Faber & Faber, they would have worked on it in totally different surroundings. That you call such an app as the two of you made a book is not only for price reasons, it is also because you want to belong to an authoritative, independent creative sector that is self-sustainable and self-renewable. I think that is the true quality of non-fiction, of quality non-fiction publishing, creating value for readers and writers and not only finding readers for writers but also being able to find new writers for new readers, and the whole interchange between the two. The term 'interface value' comes to mind again. The role of translators, not only individually as propagandists for quality but perhaps more collectively, as movements, as agencies, as professional communities, might also be further developed.

I think that there isn't so much, looking at the discussions we've had, a divide between non-digital products and digital products, because I think we all agree that, as Lisa said, the pie is becoming bigger and it is one and the same pie, divided between old and new players. There are simply alternatives to choose from, both for creative professionals and for consumers, and various forms of the product, the content, can exist together, next to each other. The divide is perhaps more a mental one, where there are the very old people of fifty-five, as was said (luckily I'm still two years off from that) and there is the new generation for whom, I must say to Grégory, the handling of a website and a PC and an iPad or a mobile phone is something that comes with learning to live, and is not so complicated, nor is it an elitist faculty.

We have to close the divide between two professional mentalities: the digital mentality and the bookish mentality, the mobile and the sedentary. Both are totally literate perspectives, but in many of the cases we have discussed they still seem to be different sides of the coin. On the one hand there are the enhanced digital professionals and on the other hand the traditional book professionals, both of whom need the other. We as bookish professionals need the enhanced digital professionals to show us new ways and new initiatives, but it is clear that the enhanced digital professionals are very interested in the values that the existing publishing profession has to offer and these values are not only cultural values, intellectual values, they are also market values, as the subject of pricing goes to show. Looking at the present state of quality non-fiction publishing, it is clear that it's in a state of flux, halfway between the analogue world and the digital age. So the question is perhaps whether the water glass is half full or whether it's half empty, and you all know what the entrepreneur says when he's confronted with that dilemma: where's the tap? The tap is the authors and the translators. They used to be the source of all that we as publishers, editors, agents and booksellers were able to do, and in the digital age the picture will not change. So as that's the one conclusion of this conference I can safely draw, I would like your warmest applause for the authors and for the translators present here and of course for the Foundation for organizing this wonderful get-together. Thank you very much.

**Maarten Valken** - The first conference we organized more than ten years ago lasted three days. We went back to one and a half days thinking we should shorten it, but I think this one could have gone on even longer. But then we would have encountered the problems of abundance. Yesterday I started by saying this would be a different conference than the

previous ones. I think I can rephrase a few of the things I said yesterday. I said it took a very long time to organize it, with all the different participants. We tried to plan it as well as we could, of course, we used that time, but now I can frankly say I was not completely sure how it would work out, with all the different views and especially with the differences between the UK, the USA and Europe and Holland. During the last two days I've already been getting a lot of compliments about how it was going and I'm happy with that, but I would like to bring back those compliments to you. Because I was very impressed, first of all by some of the participants going through heavy snowstorms to get here, but this really went on, the discussion started immediately. Usually these conferences have taken off slowly and by the Saturday morning there was a big getting together of everyone in discussion. This one started so quickly yesterday that I was almost afraid what would happen today. There's another problem too that you solved. We were always looking for a new theme, whether it was the difference between non-fiction and fiction, the taboo in non-fiction, academic non-fiction for a broad audience, and at the end we started to think: what will be the next theme? I think that has been solved; we can go on with this one for quite some further conferences.

Now, if you organize a conference like this you know you can pick the room, you can think: we'll bring everybody close to each other and it will work, but of course it only works if you have a moderator like Maarten Asscher. Thank you very much.