



Book Industry Study Group

Book Industry Study Group, Inc. • 19 West 21st Street • Suite 905 • New York, NY 10010 • Tel: (646) 336 7141 • www.bisg.org

BISG Annual Meeting of Members 2006

September 8, 2006, 10:00am-2:30pm

Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Joseph Gonnella, Chair Emeritus
Book Industry Study Group Board of Directors

“Today I am unapologetic about starting off with a poem.

ODE TO THE BOOK II¹

Book,
beautiful
book,
little forest,
leaf
after leaf,
your paper
smells
of the elements,
you are
daily and nocturnal,
grain,
ocean;
in your ancient pages
bear hunters,
bonfires
along the Mississippi,
canoes
in the islands,
later on
roads
and more roads,
revelations,
rebellious
towns,
Rimbaud, like an injured
blood-soaked fish

¹ Neruda, Pablo. *The Poetry of Pablo Neruda*. “Ode to the Book II”. New York City; Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.



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gasping in the mud,
and the beauty
of brotherhood,
stone by stone
building the human castle,
grief interwoven
with firmness,
solidarity;
occult
book
passed from pocket
to pocket,
a secret
lamp
a red star.

We
the wandering
poets
explored
the world,
life welcomed us
at every door,
we joined
in the earthly struggle.
What was our victory?
A book,
a book filled
with human connections,
with shirts,
without isolation, with men
and tools,
a book
is our victory.

A book ripens and falls
like all fruits,
it has light
and shadow,
but its pages



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are torn away,
it gets lost
in the streets,
buried in the earth.
Book of poetry
dawning,
come back again
to hold snow or moss
in your pages
so that the footsteps
or the eyes
can leave
their traces;
once again
describe the world for us
of freshwater springs
in the thickets,
groves of tall trees,
the polar
planets,
and human beings
on the roads,
on the new roads,
advancing
in the jungle,
on the water,
in the sky,
in the naked solitude of the sea,
human beings
discovering
the ultimate secrets,
human beings
returning
with a book,
the hunter coming home
with a book,
the farmer
working the land
with a book.

I think that states my position!



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Now to the business at hand!

Let me extend a warm welcome to our new Executive Director and my colleague, Michael Healy. Your qualifications speak for themselves, Michael:

- 15 years' publishing industry experience
- Editorial Director of Nielsen Book Services for the past 7 years
- Chair of the International ISBN Agency
- Chair of the international committee responsible for revising the ISBN standard
- Director of BIC (Book Industry Communication)
- Chair of its product metadata committee
- Member of the ONIX International Steering Committee
- Director of the International DOI Foundation

And I look forward to hearing your keynote speech later this morning.

Let me welcome the new slate of officers who have been duly elected at this morning's Board meeting. Andrew Weber of Random House and Dominique Raccach of Sourcebooks who are sharing responsibilities as co-Chairs; Boris Wertz of ABEbooks who has been elected to the position of Vice Chair; and, in absentia, to Deborah Wiley of John Wiley and Son's and to Jan Nathan of the Publisher's Marketing Association, two stalwarts of BISG, who will reprise their roles of Secretary and Treasurer, respectively.

And let me welcome you, the members. I want to welcome, particularly, those of you who represent the cohort of over 1,000 folks who actively participate in the committees and working groups of BISG and BISAC. You are the lifeblood of our organization. You, by virtue of the tens of thousands of hours you volunteer, make our organization relevant to the industry and to the writers and readers we serve. I should make special mention of the Search Committee who devoted significant time and mental and emotional energy to our successful quest. David Walker, board member from the ABA, Andrew, Dominique, Deborah and Jan my thanks to all of you.

I would also like to take the time to thank two folks from Phillips Oppenheim who were indispensable to the selection process. Angela Henry and Susan Meade can you stand for a moment so we can acknowledge you? In my travels I haunt used book stores and on the shelf of one of them I found this book by none other than E. Phillips Oppenheim whose books are in print today by the miracle of Print On Demand. The title is *The Way of These Women* it's not a first edition but a reprint from 1907 with a delightful dust jacket that has survived the ravages of time. Let me read you the letter that I wrote to accompany the book:



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Dear Angela & Susan:

At Phillips Oppenheim the way of these women is extraordinarily professional, sensitive and thorough.

I speak for the BISG Search Committee and the entire Board of Directors when I express my deepest gratitude for your help in fielding a slate of over 20 outstanding candidates and then helping us responsibly select the Executive Director who will lead the Book Industry Study Group into the future.

Thank you both.

While I must admit I am grateful to be relinquishing the gavel, my commitment to BISG will be undiminished. I will remain on the Executive Committee as well as on the Board itself, and I will lead a new Transition Committee consisting of Jeff Abraham, our distinguished previous Executive Director, and the battle tested, grumpy-chairman-and-absent-executive-director-surviving Angela Bole, without whom none of us would be here today.

Thank you, Angela. You and Sara Raffel have done a terrific job of keeping the ship afloat in the past eight months. The four of us will be available to help Michael for as long as he needs it, as we work through a smooth transition and toward the great achievements that lie ahead.

Now let me speak with my Barnes & Noble hat on.

Early twenty-first century heroic capitalist materialism has taught me that we as individuals are not defined by what we have done, but rather by what we have yet to do. I have come to understand and if I happen to forget, I am politely reminded by my colleagues at B&N, that only by our pursuit of the future are we anything at all. The best of us pursue the future relentlessly; we embrace the process of its becoming.

So please forgive me if I don't dwell on BISG's accomplishments of the last thirty years or of the last three years or of the last three months, they are myriad, and others will do a better job today of sharing with you some of those details. Rather, I would have you cast your attention to the things we have yet to do. And I will address these observations directly to you Michael.

We have not yet formalized BISG's relationship with many of the organizations we have identified on our road map as being central to our mission.

Even where we have long-standing or direct relationships with those organizations, there is much unfinished work. For instance, none of us in this room today can say for sure how large our industry is or how many actual publishers there are or even how many titles are due to be published this month,



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much less this year. This limits our collective ability to establish benchmarks and to legitimately measure our respective successes or shortcomings.

Michael, reconciling these numbers with the AAP, AAUP, ECPA, Bowker and BookScan, among others, must be high on your list of priorities.

Unlike the UK, Michael, we don't yet have an ONIX accreditation program. We have not yet as an industry addressed the issues of data quality and data synchronicity. Every day sales are lost and customers are aggravated because of missing, incomplete or just plain bad data about the books we sell.

Unlike our colleagues in Canada, Michael, we have no application that allows an Author or an Editor to validate the way their titles are presented to the consumer—no way for them to make corrections or suggest changes efficiently.

We don't yet, as an industry, have a certification program to ensure the Bar Codes we use to identify the books we sell scan properly. Last week we discovered one of our top five publisher's (who will go nameless) had printed on five different titles discreet human readable ISBNs over an identical barcode that bore no relation to the book titles we were actually selling.

Can you imagine the confusion this creates at the cash-wrap, in the receiving rooms and in our warehouses as we try to stock, sell and replenish those titles?

Michael, I know DEIG has been working on but has not yet gotten traction for a shipping label container certification program. Thousands of person hours a month are wasted as booksellers try to receive cartons where critical information is either inconsistently placed or absent. Many of us are doing redundant work as we struggle trading partner by trading partner to get consistency in this area.

On another front, Michael, who in this room can tell me what working group is establishing industry standards associated with digital rights management? Who in this room can tell me by what method we can definitively associate a specific work with a specific rights holder? I understand search engines are powerful tools. I also understand that they are no substitute for rigorously organized information. Education is not an accident and knowledge is not a best guess. I happen to believe that the adoption by our Industry of the International Standard Text Code and the Interested Party Identifier, both defined in our Road Map of Identifiers, are prerequisites for the successful implementation of any digital rights management program.

How else can we tell Francis Bacon the painter from Francis Bacon the philosopher?

How else can we distinguish Bill Knott the poet from Bill Knott the suspense novelist from Bill Knott the YA novelist?



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How else can we tell Tom Clancy, the author of *Hunt for the Red October*, from Tom Clancy the author of a number of books on woodworking?

When, Michael, will our industry embrace the principles of Collaborative Planning Forecasting and Replenishment that have been so well articulated by our cousins in general retail?

How will our industry react to the implementation of RFID in general retail?

I could go on, Michael, but I won't.

If the past two years of my tenure here has taught me anything it is that, as cantankerous as we all are, there is no other group in our industry more capable of answering my questions than the members of the Book Industry Study Group.

Let us embrace the future together!

Excelsior!

Thank you all!"