

Ebook enhancements, prices, novel distribution, platforms, and more...

Randy Kuckuck spoke at the BAIPA (Bay Area Independent Publishers Assn) meeting this past Saturday, Sept. 8. Let me share some of the key points, as I heard them.

Randy is a veteran publisher who began as the CFO at BookCrafters, which was one of the industry leaders in short-run book printing—and, years back, my first printer. While at BookCrafters, he created Scarborough House.

Randy's topic was "**Thinking Outside the Book.**" How to get our minds out of the analog mindset, to view the book as a literary and artistic work. "Today's technology provides the ability to present works in ways that publishers and authors are struggling to understand and implement. We need to take control and drive the technology to keep up with our creativity."

Here's what I found the most interesting:

- * If your book is for the older reader, forget enhancements (they have the money but many can't use computers well). If the reader is younger, enhance away!
- * If you are writing a book to sell through a major house, stick with the traditional format (focus on the quality of the book) and let the publisher worry about or suggest enhancements.
- * Why enhance a book? The person may be more likely to buy the book, but they won't pay more. Add motion, music, video, sound, links.

- * If you are going to change your ebook's media format, think of the available technology first, then write your book around it.
- * Amazon will charge you if you publish big-space books (tons of photos and stored copy) through them. It can cost you half your royalty! (Randy said that will change; digital space cost less and less...)
- * If you want to publish your ebooks at Kindle, Nook, and Smashwords, if you want fixed-page layout on the different platforms, farm out the conversion job.
- * If you want to create enhanced ebook pages and you provide the text and artwork, you can get it for as little as \$7/page.
- * Many publishers think that just adding video snippets to the ebook text is enhancement enough. Randy: "But if the video doesn't add value, it's a waste of money."
- * If you use MAC, you can use *iBooks Author* (a free download) to create lots of book enhancements, but the ebook you create only works at the Apple Store (on their platform).
- * Consider serialization of ebook fiction. Have the buyer pay up front, then send them chapters at a set time.
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* To read good inside info, see Mark Coker's blog. He owns [Smashwords](#).

* Your ebook prices are usually a third to a quarter of your bound book prices.

* 30% of the ebooks sold are from independent publishers.

* APPS are the wrong way to go: they lower the value of your book.

* If you don't want to publish a full book, Random Books (Canada) has a new nonfiction imprint of short books. Or check Kindle Singles; they also accept e-articles!

* There's no good way to keep track of what books are in print. Bowker does this by ISBN, but they are way behind. Amazon has its own data base. (My suggestion: If you know the title, topic, or author, you might just Google it.)

* Epub 3 may be the future direction since it lets you embed almost anything and can be read by all platforms but Kindle's.

* Check the *BISG Platform Guide* to see which device will accept what (kinds of text and enhancements).

A very good presentation by Randy Kuckuck, and much appreciated. It all makes huge sense.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett