

SaskBooks PD Notes

Day 1

Mosaic Tower III, 2010 12th Avenue, Regina, SK

What NOT To Do with Book Cover Design

with Richard T. Williams, IPG

Who is Richard, and what is IPG?

-Independent Publishers Group has been around for about 40 years, and is based out of Chicago.

IPG has 100s of clients

-IPG is a distribution company. A distributor conglomerates publishers into a single "must have" list. IPG has 500 publishers on their list, which makes them as big as Random House or Simon and Schuster.

-IPG takes the role of the publisher in the hierarchy of book purchasing – so if people are searching for your book, they'll get IPG first. They don't eclipse the publishing brand, how they need to be first and foremost

-distributor sells to wholesalers and retailers

-Distributors provide publishers affordability, clout, and curation

Sales: Channels including chains stores, online retail, national wholesale, and others

-IPG also handles digital sales; they work with all formats of a title, and it allows them to cross-promote whenever possible.

-IPG also offers publisher development. Publisher Development helps publishers figure out ways to make their publishers grow. Once you're signed to IPG, IPG wants you to grow, to sell more books. So they can offer advice on how to handle marketing, design, pricing, and all other elements to maximize performance for the good of the publishers and IPG

The Three Ps of Development: Publish, Presentation, Package

Cover Designation Your Cover is Not Just Art! Your cover is your number one marketing tool, period.

Title, Subtitle, Reading Line, Author Name, Credentials, Endorsements, Genre are all represented by your cover, and if any of them are wrong, it jeopardizes your ability to sell the book.

-if you have words in your title or subtitle that are common, it will make it harder to find, so consider adding important keywords for discoverability. Subtitles are important for this

-the reading line helps position your book, information that isn't covered by the subtitle

-even the position of the author name is significant. Usually you put author name at the top if the author is established, but generally it should go at the bottom for emerging writers

-Endorsements are very important. A good endorsement means a great deal not just to consumers but to buyers as well

-every genre has different specs on how a book should be positioned. A cookbook has to have colour photographs to be competitive, for instance, and it should be about \$24.95. Higher than that, you'll be edging yourself out of the market, and lower than that you won't be competitive enough.

What NOT to Do

-font should be readable; title, subtitle, author (eg no white on white). Legibility is especially important these days, because the number one way people experience covers now is a 2x2 thumbnail online

-don't mark "Book One" on the front of a book; people will be reluctant to commit to a series, especially from a first-time or unknown author. Leave book one off, wait until book one is a success, then you can advertise book two, and if you reprint book one, you can mention it then.

-any how-to-book needs to be informative as to what it's about on the cover

No Design

- a drawing is not necessarily a book cover; it needs design to complete it!
- a photograph needs further design to be a complete cover. Just title and a photo is not a sufficient cover

A white book will get dirty immediately, as will an all black book. Buyers will shy away from books for just that reason. Because books are returnable, you can expect books that get dirty to get returned

Design is Not a Template

- design can not be done by template; there are formulas, but templates make books seem samey and make it hard to position them

me Me ME!!!

- the first problem that self-published authors come across is that they have a story they really want to tell, but they aren't thinking about the other side; who's going to read it? What's going to appeal to them? If you don't target your market and appeal to it, no one will read the story, no matter how fascinating it is. You have to make the connection to your audience
- Try to avoid "my" and "me", because it doesn't leave room for the reader
- Avoid "one woman", "one man", "one something". Not only is a cliché, it makes the material less accessible
- you need to explain to the reader why they want to be part of "Wanda's World"
- the more specific the subject, or the more specific it seems, the harder it is to sell

My Kid/My Cat

- so many children's books star a child who is the author's own child. This gives the book an overly personal style, which makes it difficult to read it other children
- do what you can put a wall between the real thing and the content. It's okay to draw inspiration from things and people that you know, but you have to put some distance so there is room for readers
- you should never write books about your own cat!
 - of course, there are always exceptions (like Marley & Me). But if you are going to do it, do it well

Bad Choices

- unoriginal concepts. Don't do something that something is so overused that it registers as something that is already done
- never put a colon after by. It makes it look like filling in the blank. You basically don't need "written" either, although maybe if there is an illustration credit
- too much drop shadow, white-text on white-background. If your book looks like a greeting card, that's bad – greeting cards don't have to market themselves the same way books do
- no misspellings on the cover
- avoid iconography too close to trademarked images
- when you write a children's book, you want to aim for children's appeal (so a reference to a Paul Simon song doesn't necessarily help)
- a good-looking design can still be badly positioned
- a redundant subtitle is a waste of space that could be better used to provide more information
- a book for teens should have teen appeal; a survival guide also should not look more like a how-to
- a generic subtitle, especially for a how-to, doesn't help. Maybe two or three bullet points to help indicate who the book is for

- “there is really no room for washboard abs on a children's book”

What Is It?

- a subtitle would be part of the primary metadata. It usually has some impacts on positioning, and a reading line is almost always a third element instead of a second element
- a book cover is not a movie poster; the elements don't necessarily translate well
- never, ever use more than one font on your title. There is no reason for it. It separates the words and makes your title fall apart
- if you have to guess what genre or audience a book is, then it's poorly positioned
- there is a really fine line between being intriguing and being obtuse and pushing everyone away
- the kind of person on the cover will indicate the audience of the book to readers – children for children, teens for teens, etc. So it will be confusing if a teen book has adults on it, for instance

Good Choices

- consistent fonts
- a full bleed of a great image can give a book a much for timely quality; borders can run up against changing trends in colour selection, for instance
- too literal of a representation of a title can create a misleading cover, which positions it poorly
- even something as simple as a subtitle can make a story less personal, and create more space for the reader

- one thing you should do, is no matter what category you are publishing in, you should go to Amazon and look at other books that are comparable to what you are doing and are successful, and try to identify what makes it successful
- print off your book cover, then print out five or six other covers of books in that category, and see if your cover fits in

- an imprint is a tool that you can create to separate out projects so that you can maintain the marketing impact of both that book and the regular publishing profile. Like a literary publisher that gets a great trade/non-fiction book can put it out under an imprint, so it's not too connected to the literary efforts, maintaining the image of both

The Alberta Library eBook Purchasing Policy Negotiated by the Book Publishers Association of Alberta

with Kieran Leblanc, BPAA Executive Director

- Kieran has been ED of BPAA since 2009. BPAA has 38 active book publisher members, publishing a full range of genres
- BPAA members currently have 1200 ebook titles

The Story of the eBook Purchasing Policy

- it consists of all of the ebooks that are available from Alberta publishers up to March 31 this year
- it all started with a phone call from Alberta Municipal Affairs (which covers libraries)
- the goal of the library was to make sure that every Albertan had access to every ebook produced in Alberta, and BPAA's goal was to make sure that the publishers get paid
- fortunately, they were open to the need of publishers to be paid
- BPAA put together a committee of publishers who met with some staff from the Ministry in order to brainstorm and come up with plan
- early on they identified they had money, but it was unknown how much money
- at that time, there was no other model in Canada to look to for guidance, which had advantages and

disadvantages

- there were many discussions about pricing models, access models, use of OverDrive or other formats
- it was a challenge moving forward because there were 4 changes of Ministers, 5 changes of Deputy Minister, and a change away from a Conservative government after 44 years
- there were also many discussions with vendors
- an RPF was distributed from the Ministry for vendors to put forward proposals with a deadline of May 5, and already the Ministry has selected a vendor
- because the process was taking so long, Municipal Affairs asked to give the money to BPAA, to have BPAA prepare the collection and ensure that the publishers get paid
- eBound Canada was contracted to prepare the collection, and each publisher will be paid a multiplier of their retail sale, but the multiplier will be based on the entire value of the collection
- the collection is both front and back list, as chosen by the publishers (so some publishers have chosen to omit some textbooks, for example)
- the collection should be available at the end of the month
- once the vendor is announced, eBound Canada can work with the vendor to get the metadata requirements
- the vendor will then need to install their platform in all the library systems, work with eBound, then install the collection, with an aim to complete in October or November
- BPAA will be working with the Government to do a big launch of this program

Some Quick Facts

- the collection consists of 1100 and 1200 ebooks
- there are 26 publishers contribution to the collection
- only members of the BPAA are eligible to participate in the project
- the price will be a multiple of the print list price, based on the overall cost of the collection
- one copy of each title is purchased, and it's accessible by all patrons of all libraries
- it's simultaneous use, but there is a lending cap of 50, after which the title will be repurchased based on the same multiplier
- the intention of Municipal affairs is to continue to add to the collection, so a system needs to be worked out for processing new titles (quarterly, or what have you)

This has been a 3 year process so far. Publishers are over the moon, Librarians are over the moon. Publishers are getting paid for their content, and librarians are thrilled to have access to all of this material. This deal is strictly with public libraries (324 branches, in 7 regional systems, Calgary, Edmonton, and a few independent library branches that don't belong to a region).

There is some discussion on the part of Municipal branch to explore audiobooks. The Writers Guild is miffed not to be part of the process, but the publishers pay the writers so it works out. Simultaneous use was a big desire for all of the partners, which made OverDrive less than ideal for the process. Focusing on BPAA members made this a manageable sample size for this project; adding the Writers Guild would have made it complicated and unwieldy. This model can be taken across Canada to different Governments – the amount for the purchase was \$200,000, some of which will remain with BPAA and some of which will be given to eBound, but the rest will go directly to the publishers.

The urgent next step is to figure out how to do the repurchase. The titles were submitted by publishers, of books that are already in electronic format, but which are not already available in Alberta Libraries. Publishers are also being allowed to choose the format they want their book to be available in, based on the format of the book (eg PDF for children's books, ePub 3 for others). Publishers can submit in multiple formats, but it doesn't generate extra funds.

The commitment from the government is to renew the titles when the circulation cap is reached, and intake the new titles. There is term on this program at this time – it's routine and will be part of their budget from year to year.

Trade Development Program

- a pilot program to help publishers get their titles out to other markets
- provides a subsidy to publisher members to attend foreign rights fair to negotiate sales
- BPAA is offering a training program to help publishers with the process and help them get ready for rights sale
- utilizes the FRMAP list book fairs

Job Creation and Staff Development Program

- another subsidy program to help publishers take care of their own professional development
- for projects like attending pubwest or bringing mentors into publishing houses
- a one time infusion of cash; the program will keep running until the funding runs out, then it will be evaluated for suitability to be ongoing