



Interview with Rüdiger Wischenbart
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KENNEALLY: The annual Publishers' Forum, opening today in Berlin, aims to reach beyond the usual scope of publishing conferences. From artificial intelligence to big data and video games to virtual reality, Publishers' Forum is going full circle.

Welcome to Copyright Clearance Center's podcast series. I'm Christopher Kenneally for Beyond the Book. Publishers' Forum host and organizer Rüdiger Wischenbart asserts that publishing today is a cycle, not a straight line from author to publisher and finally on to the reader. Innovative publishing strategies, he says, acknowledge the growing importance of user-generated content as well as recognize that government, in the form of copyright legislation, could determine the industry's future. Wischenbart joins me now. Welcome back to Beyond the Book, Rüdiger.

WISCHENBART: Hi, Chris. Pleased to meet you here again.

KENNEALLY: Yes, indeed. Very, very happy to have you back. You've got a full plate ahead of you this week at Publishers' Forum in Berlin. Klopotek is a leading supplier of software and consulting services for print and online publishers, and they hosted the inaugural session of what is now Publishers' Forum in 2004. It's important to remember, while that doesn't seem so very long ago, 2004 was the year Google became a public company, and it was much before the arrival later in the decade of the Kindle and the iPhone. So a lot of water under the bridge for publishing and the rest of the economy.

As director of the event – Publishers' Forum – since 2015, you've encouraged debate and critical self-examination of a wide range of industry assumptions, all



while puzzling over the notion that the business of books is expanding, converging, and fragmenting all at the same time. I think that's a really important point and very philosophically worth reflecting on. So tell us – what do you have in store for this year?

WISCHENBART: Let me start with giving you one example that would have been unimaginable 13, 14 years ago. Everybody has heard about Angry Birds, these little creatures that populate your smartphone and that you can shoot around, etc. That is a global success story, but it was invented in Finland by a PR agency or marketing agency, and that was connected to a publisher. That small independent publisher and the marketing agency from Finland succeeded in creating a global success. Now, most recently, they turned that success into redefining their company into an entertainment company. We will have as one of the speakers the founder of that publishing arm, Kaiken, that was behind Angry Birds and which is now behind this new entertainment company. I guess in a nutshell, that shows you very well all these fascinating things that are going on right now in publishing and that are really redefining what this industry is all about.

KENNEALLY: Right. That's an issue that we have followed on Beyond the Book a fair amount – the next dimension in telling a story. And beyond incorporating video game thinking and user analytics, this also brings up such future tech as virtual reality and augmented reality. They're on the conference agenda, as well.

WISCHENBART: In continental Europe, we are in a very weird situation right now. When you interview lots of publishers, you could think that we are in a lull where nothing much is happening. Ebooks have not caught on as massively as in the US or in the UK. No big failures, no big crashes have been seen for quite a while. Even the mergers and acquisitions have a little bit calmed down. So many people think not much is happening.

At the same time, we see with virtual reality, with machine learning, with big data analytics, with semantic, that when you bother about really looking into content



and into consumers, you really literally are about to reinvent the whole game. That's what we want to look into.

KENNEALLY: It's fascinating, Rüdiger. You're describing a paradoxical situation not unlike what you pointed out earlier, that the business of books is expanding, converging, and fragmenting all at the same time. So while we appear to be in a lull, we're also at a moment of great technical and technological innovation.

This raises another paradox that you'll be examining at Publishers' Forum, which is the importance of a global approach, and yet the opportunity for small entrants to extend value by inserting themselves into new niches. So there's a need to be global, and yet there's an opportunity for the newer, smaller players. Tell us how that works out.

WISCHENBART: We will welcome, for instance, one British publisher who used to work at a midsized independent nonfiction publishing company and then at one point said, no, he wants to set up his own company. The focused thought was he wanted to do more about curating stuff. Curating is obviously a very old concept, but with all the technology, he said he can do a very small shop and curate content across media, across formats by himself with a small team and go about it in a very global perspective. I think the person who will speak about this from his own experience is Michael Bhaskar. He wrote a book about curation, and he set up his own publishing company named Canelo. I guess that's a very good example to show that from really a tiny shop, from your kitchen table if you wish, you can do very meaningful work and you can work together, you can cooperate with the largest entities out there.

KENNEALLY: Right. There has never been a great opportunity to enter the publishing game, if you will, but there are areas where there could be obstacles and obstructions. There's a concern among publishers across Europe and around the world, really, with regard to so-called copyright reform and changes in regulatory policy. The European Union is examining that, and many countries elsewhere are,



too. My colleague Michael Healy is joining you there in Berlin. He is the executive director of international relations for Copyright Clearance Center. He's going to deliver a keynote, kind of a tee-up to a session around some of these issues looking at regulatory policy and its impact on publishing. Tell us a little bit more about that.

WISCHENBART: I am personally very happy and excited to have Michael back again in Berlin. He has been at the conference several times already. This time is special for me, because he will have a very – almost bizarre role. Because we want to discuss copyright reform in Europe, but I picked an American to give us the broad picture on the European debate. Why so? Because suddenly I realized that each country in Europe has created their own copyright debate, but except for a few experts, hardly anyone knows what their neighbor is doing and why some cry out catastrophe in one country, while next door in the neighboring country, people are crying to be more pragmatic, etc.

What is it all about? It is to reserve, on the one hand, that publishers continue to have their role in creating value out of material content, etc., and at the same time to get to terms that any user can generate their own valuable content and be either a partner or a competitor. For the lawmakers who are also on a tight budget, that opens opportunities of saying, well, perhaps we can get the stuff from the publishers more cheaply. That has been triggering, really, controversies all over Europe.

And here, a very experienced outside observer such as Michael Healy is for me a perfect person to give us a panorama view on what is at stake. What are the models, the solutions that are currently under debate? And how can we find a middle ground to be more oriented toward good solutions that are practical and not only are being driven by fear and by blaming that someone else could be sitting on our table and want to have a part of our meal?



KENNEALLY: Right. I know, Rüdiger Wischenbart, that your ambition for Publishers' Forum is to encourage debate. You don't simply want to have people talk at each other, but to talk with each other. Debate is critical.

WISCHENBART: Oh, yes. We really hate sales pitches. I'm very happy that people agree on that, and they enjoy to interact with each other.

KENNEALLY: Indeed. And one of the ways that publishers are interacting more and more is across the value chain by really leveraging the rights they have and using licensing as a tool to monetize further. There will be a discussion again that Michael will join including David Hetherington with Klopotek and Kris Kliemann, a well-known rights consultant, moderated by Informa executive Fionnuala Duggan. Tell us what the point there is around integrated rights. This is about extending value chains, right?

WISCHENBART: Until just a few years ago, the rights trade was really governed by a few gatekeepers called literary agents, and they were buying or selling one book at a time. Today, we want to be able to sell a picture, a chart, two pages of a work, and reaggregate this in new contexts. You can imagine easily that that requires a lot of management which is only feasible and viable with decent technology. You really need to have your homework done properly if you want to identify the rights contract information for each and every piece of content that you own with different terms and conditions for those with commercial potential that you want to leverage. That workshop is going to really focus on what are the tools in place today? What are the experiences? What do we need to think about? And where can we get our hands free by leaving the hard work, the heavy lifting, to technology?

KENNEALLY: All right. We will leave that to you and the attendees at today's Publishers' Forum opening in Berlin. We've been speaking with the organizer and host of Publishers' Forum, publishing consultant Rüdiger Wischenbart. Thank you so much for joining us on Beyond the Book.



WISCHENBART: Chris, thanks so much for having me. It was really a pleasure.

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Beyond the Book co-producer and recording engineer is Jeremy Brieske of Burst Marketing. I'm Christopher Kenneally. Join us again soon on Beyond the Book.

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