



2017 Year-in-Review: The Business of Publishing
Featuring (in order of appearance)

- **Paul Boyle, The News Media Alliance**
- **Michele Cobb, Audio Publishers Association**
- **Maxwell Riggsbee, Gadget Software**

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KENNEALLY: Demand for quality journalism rose in 2017, but demands on journalism’s longstanding business models weighed heavily on reporters and publishers, too. It’s hardly breaking news that the news business is hoping to innovate its way out of a digital dilemma.

Welcome to Copyright Clearance Center’s podcast series. I’m Christopher Kenneally for Beyond the Book, looking back at the last twelve months of our program.

Among the lasting catchphrases of 2017 is “fake news.” The News Media Alliance, a Washington-based trade organization representing nearly 2,000 North American news organizations, works to sustain news-gathering operations and the communities that rely on professional news for reliable information.

Paul Boyle, senior vice president, public policy for NMA, manages the group’s legislative and regulatory affairs. He told me this spring that the fight over “fake news” will be a long-term struggle – one as much about business models as about reliable sources.

BOYLE: I think to produce high-quality journalism, where there’s original reporting, editing, vetting of sources, you need to see and explore various business models to support that journalism. I think that’s what the focus is of the futures of news. It’s not just one strategy. It’s multiple strategies and



trying to reach and connect and engage with our audiences and then be able to monetize our content, either through traditional print distribution or through digital distribution. Newspapers have the biggest audiences when you combine print and digital than any other media. We have certainly challenges to the business model. But the future is bright because of the various strategies and actually consumers' desire for news and high-quality, real news by real journalists.

KENNEALLY: Indeed, that's really become very clear recently, as people sort of struggle with sorting out the fake from the real and finding it in places that is – or are, I should say – reliable. It's interesting to me that the news industry is really embracing innovation, embracing technology. And the kind of innovation that we're talking about here isn't only the innovation you can hold in your hand, but it's also innovative ways of thinking about news-gathering.

BOYLE: No question about it. We have a number of programs through our sister organization, the American Press Institute, that help newspapers, for example, look at metrics of how consumers are using content. What kind of content are they looking for? It used to be a day in which the editor would meet with the staff and say, OK, what are we going to put out there today? Then they would make that decision. Now, through digital distribution and being able to connect with consumers and engage consumers, we know what consumers want as far as content. So we're actually providing consumers what they want, where they want it, and how they want it.

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KENNEALLY: Can you hear that? It's in the background everywhere you go in the book world, and it's definitely growing louder.

The sound I'm talking about comes from audiobooks, the fastest growing segment of the trade book publishing market. Early in 2017, OverDrive, a leading provider of digital publishing to public libraries, reported a 34%



rise in 2016 audiobook borrowing numbers over 2015 *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins was the most popular title.

To accommodate consumer and reader demand, audiobook production has flourished and Audible.com, the listening service owned by Amazon, has taken a dominant market share. The US-based Audio Publishers Association says available titles grew from about 7,000 in 2011 to more than 35,000 in 2015.

Michele Cobb, APA's executive director, told me what's behind the explosion heard in audiobooks.

COBB: it's just an exciting time to be in our industry, because so many more people are listening and so many more books are being published. I think that's really what is helping to drive the growth. More people have more books available to them. They realize that audio is out there. They try it. And then they are excited to listen to something else.

KENNEALLY: The book business is listening too. Audiobooks drove much of the growth seen in 2017. Because almost everyone has a smartphone in their pocket, they now have access to audiobooks wherever they go – waiting at the doctor's office or driving in the car. And Michele Cobb says audiobooks have filled a need.

COBB: There's so much that's coming at us today in terms of entertainment. But we all have to be doing things. So when we're driving, as you mentioned, when we are folding laundry, if we can be taking in material – book material, it could be a play, a wide variety of things are available in audio – we can really be using our time wisely and entertaining ourselves and educating ourselves as well, which is what a lot of people do when they're listening to audiobooks.

When the iPod came out and Audible was growing, we started to see this huge surge of interest in audiobooks and listening to audiobooks. What's nice about the digital format – you know, when we started in the industry and there were phonographs and records and all of that, you could only put



so much material onto each record or onto each cassette or onto each CD. In a digital world, really the file can be as large as you want, so you don't need to worry about abridging any of the materials, and you can carry an entire book with you on a small stick or on a phone or on your computer. So you have access to a larger amount of materials in a very easy-to-use format.

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KENNEALLY: In 2017, smartphones rule the world. Remarkably it is only a decade since Steve Jobs introduced the first iPhone in January 2007. At the time, Jobs boasted that his company, Apple, intended nothing less than to reinvent the phone. Today, that boast is an accomplishment.

Like any technology environment, the smartphone world has rules – rules that publishers must learn, says Maxwell Riggsbee, chief product officer at Gadget Software, a mobile publishing platform developer.

The new reading that is coming to dominate our media world, Riggsbee says, must be complemented by a new kind of publishing that helps readers discover information in a blizzard of data.

RIGGSBEE: This medium has really changed the way in which users, readers, interact with content. Perhaps the biggest thing here is selectivity – our ability to pick out the pieces that we want, perhaps at times even share those pieces or organize them in a new way, and deliver them out to an audience that we ourselves may be creating. This bidirectional nature and always-on connectivity of the smartphone is really changing our relationship with content.

KENNEALLY: And we're not just rewiring the technology, but it could be that we are rewiring our brains. As I understand, Maryanne Wolf at the Tufts University Center for Reading has looked into this and has come to the conclusion from her research that we're not born with any kind of innate ability to read. Our minds create the circuit to do so. And that circuit gets wired according to the form factor. It essentially defines the scope and



the intensity of our interaction with a particular medium. So how are smartphones rewiring the reading path in our brains?

RIGGSBEE: This is actually a very fascinating conversation, because it's not just that the smartphone is rewiring that path, it's changing the complete relationship that we have with information. As we think about a book, which is that linear read – you start at the beginning, and you work your way all the way through – there's a similar kind of experience you have with a webpage, although those hyperlinks enable you to take that nonlinear journey, the real thing that happens with smartphones is information gets smaller, it's delivered to you, and you have to take on whole new strategies to filter, sift, select, and search for the kind of information that you want, but also to make decisions. Our reading becomes more utility in nature, as opposed to a comprehensive read that we once enjoyed when we were reading books and webpages.

So we're developing all kinds of strategies to just deal with this deluge of information that comes all the time from a variety of sources, many of which are not books.

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KENNEALLY: The speed of technological development at the beginning of the 21st century has outpaced our human ability to absorb the change. We have landed in a new world and have barely begun to explore it. I'm Christopher Kenneally, looking back at 2017 for CCC's Beyond the Book.