



Interview with Hugo Setzer, president, International Publishers Association

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KENNEALLY: Founded in Paris in 1896, the International Publishers Association may have headquarters in Geneva, but for the next two years, its heart will lie in Mexico City.

Welcome to Copyright Clearance Center's podcast series. I'm Christopher Kenneally for Beyond the Book.

With offices in a neighborhood of the Mexican capital that is celebrated for historic Art Deco buildings and contemporary art galleries, the publishing house Manual Moderno recently marked its 60th anniversary. Over nearly half that time, Hugo Setzer has served as Manual Moderno's CEO, building its reputation across Latin America for publishing excellence in medicine and psychology. And since January of this year, Hugo Setzer also serves as president of IPA. He joins me today from Mexico City to share his goals and ambitions for his two-year term. Welcome to Beyond the Book, Hugo Setzer.

SETZER: Hi, Chris. Thank you for inviting me to your program.

KENNEALLY: Well, we're looking forward to catching up with you as you begin this new two-year term as president of IPA, and I guess the place to begin is to ask you for a preview. What lies ahead for you and for IPA?

SETZER: Well, my main purpose is, I think I could say safely, to continue a lot of work we have been doing. I think it's also good for me to have been able to serve as vice president for the past two years. So, I had the chance to also participate in shaping the way we're doing things right now together with Michiel Kolman, who did a great job as IPA president. So, I think there is a lot of work to continue. There are, of course, some things where we might have some different personalities, so there will be some minor differences, perhaps. But in general, I would say that it's to continue to focus on our two main pillars, which are copyright and freedom to publish.

KENNEALLY: Let's talk about some of the differences there, because of course, you are there in Mexico City and have a very distinguished background in publishing there and across Latin America. I wonder whether that means you may have any specific national or regional priorities.



SETZER: I'm not sure if it would be called a regional priority, because I'm fully aware that my responsibility is for the whole of IPA globally, but I think it's very good that now IPA has a president and a vice president from, so to say, non-traditional countries – Latin America, and the vice president coming from the Arab world. I think it sends an important message of the truly international character of IPA.

KENNEALLY: In fact, indeed it does. I mentioned the organization began over a century ago in Paris, and although it was called the International Publishers Association, for many years it was more or less European publishers who dominated. Your point is well taken, that today with you as president and Bodour Qasimi as the vice president – and she will eventually serve as president after your term ends – this really does mean that IPA is looking beyond its traditional neighborhood and out into the rest of the world.

But I am curious to ask you further about this background in publishing in Mexico and in Latin America. It's been a very distinguished history for publishing there. Many great authors – Octavio Paz and Gabriel García Márquez and Borges, among others, just to name only three. So, I wonder if you can share with the audience any thoughts you have about the region's publishing traditions and how they have helped these writers and others to gain such tremendous international fame.

SETZER: Yes, Chris, you're right as well. We have many distinguished authors. I would also mention Nobel laureate Mario Vargas Llosa, also Juan Villoro, Isabel Allende, among many others. And I think yes, it has helped to have a strong publishing industry in our countries throughout Latin America. In different countries, while we have different-sized publishing markets and industries in our different markets, but I think we have been dealing – and there is, as you mentioned, a long tradition of publishing in our region – with some of the issues which affect publishers in other regions as well, but also with some things in particular for our region as well, with some economic crises along the way as well. But I think we have been able to support – the publishing industry to support those authors and the publication of many important works, those in general literature, but also in science, in educational publishing, there are also publishers publishing also a lot of educational materials. So yeah, it's a thriving industry as well.

KENNEALLY: Indeed, your own house there, specializing in medicine in psychology – a science publisher. It follows on Michiel Kolman, who of course comes from Elsevier, likewise a science and research publisher. What are some of the very special concerns that distinguish science publishing from its genre compatriots in trade publishing or educational publishing, would you say?



SETZER: Well, for example, in our part of the world, our local companies also face – we work, and we compete also with the very large publishers, the international publishing houses, who also are established throughout the region. One of the things is sometimes that one of the issues we have as independent, so to say, publishers in the region is that as the major science publishers have been establishing their own operations in Spanish language, they’re translating their works by themselves. So many of us used to do translations sometime before, and now many of those translations are being done in house. So, it’s beginning to be also a competing market in that sense. But we also work together within the different publishers’ associations with those publishers. So yeah, I think it has some difficulties, but also, it’s good to have them within our markets as well.

KENNEALLY: Right. And regardless of the market niche and regardless of the country of origin, this important emphasis that IPA has on freedom of expression and creativity is one that is true around the world. IPA is well known for its Prix Voltaire, which is a celebration of freedom to publish and freedom of expression. Tell us about Prix Voltaire and why it is so important to IPA and to its membership.

SETZER: Thank you, Chris, for asking that question. Freedom to publish is very important for us. We think that, of course, together with copyright, they are, as mentioned, our two pillars, because even if copyright is respected, if you don’t have the freedom to publish, if your life is being threatened because of what you publish, then copyright might be the last thing in your mind if you don’t have that freedom to publish.

We have been awarding this Prix Voltaire since many years now, and it’s a way to raise our voice internationally and to recognize publishers who have bravely endured difficult circumstances. In some cases, they have been imprisoned or threatened in different countries. So, it has been very useful for those publishers as well to receive this award. They have told us so in different contexts in different countries. And this year, we are having the award ceremony during the Seoul Book Fair in the month of June.

KENNEALLY: The other pillar of IPA is, as you say, copyright, and there’s a great deal of news about copyright that seems to keep coming from various corners of the world – in South Africa, Canada, EU, Australia. Give us a quick update on where things stand and what you expect will be IPA’s next moves when it comes to challenging some of the copyright legislation.

SETZER: Yes, that’s also a very important question for us, because we believe, and I have been mentioning, that there is a global kind of orchestrated attack on copyright, and you can see that in many different countries where there are initiatives to weaken the copyright framework – like you mentioned, in Canada and



Australia and South Africa. Right this morning, we were discussing sending again another letter to South African authorities asking them to review the copyright bill that, if I understand correctly, has been passed. But it's not good for rightsholders. It's not good for authors and for publishers.

For example, in the case of Canada, we are waiting for news. We were there in Canada discussing and talking to authorities, to members of their government, to members of the Parliament, to discuss the importance of copyright in that copyright review they had. So, we went there twice to Canada last year. We went to Australia to also talk to authorities. So, we're very active in different parts of the world trying to support our members in those countries, to let their policymakers know our opinion and the importance to support and to protect copyright.

KENNEALLY: Right. Listeners will be familiar with your predecessor. He appeared on our show several times – Michiel Kolman. Now that he has ended his own term as president, he's not getting away to take any rest for very long, because you've appointed him to be your presidential envoy on diversity and inclusion. So where will you be asking Michiel to go, and what will you be hoping he will try to achieve?

SETZER: Thank you for mentioning that. Yes, exactly. During his term also, Michiel was – it was very important to him and to us in general to send a message that a more diverse and inclusive publishing industry is good and important for all.

We have been, for example, working a lot – talking about inclusion, for example, the Accessible Books Consortium, where IPA is one of its members, and we support all the actions of the Accessible Books Consortium in trying to get more books in accessible formats for visually impaired people. Nowadays, there's only less than 10% globally titles available for visually impaired people, and we're trying to raise that number to have more titles available.

Last year, we also launched – and that will also be one of Michiel's projects – we launched together with the United Nations the Sustainable Development Goals Book Club initiative. It was launched last year, and we will be working this year and the next on that project as well, and Michiel will be also involved with that.

KENNEALLY: Well, we appreciate the chance to speak with you about your ambitions for the next several years as president of the International Publishers Association. We have been speaking today with Hugo Setzer. He is CEO of Manual Moderno in Mexico City, and as we mentioned, has begun his term as president of IPA. Hugo Setzer, thank you so much for joining us on Beyond the Book.

SETZER: Thank you, Chris. It has been a pleasure.



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