

Society of Young Publishers Conference held at Brookes



On Saturday 14 November 2009, the Society of Young Publishers (SYP) held their Annual Conference at the Oxford International Centre for Publishing Studies at Oxford Brookes University. Close to 200 people attended the conference and its theme was the Impact of Publishing on Society. *Jennifer Krebs*, a Masters student in Publishing, writes about the day:

“The day started with a debate on the *Paradigms of Modern Publishing* featuring three speakers: Helen Fraser, Managing Director of Penguin; Will Atkinson, Sales and Marketing Director of Faber & Faber; and Michael Jones, Books Category Manager for Borders UK. Fraser commented on the balance of producing books that are not only benefiting society but will also sell, especially when working for a large company such as Penguin. Atkinson

offered the independent publisher’s view of developing your authors, and producing titles to be proud of but which will perhaps take longer to make a profit, such as Faber’s poetry list. Finally Jones was able to cap off the discussion with the retailer’s point of view that good books will always sell due to word of mouth, and that it is the production of the book and especially the cover design that really grabs a reader’s attention. Delegates then attended small seminars throughout the day on subjects ranging from digital publishing developments to clinics and career development.

Delegates were treated to a closing debate on whether or not we, as publishers, have the responsibility to ‘disseminate knowledge and thought’ to the public. Various points were raised in this discussion including the question of publishing having the moral authority to keep

Upcoming Events

Working in Publishing 9 March 2010

Panels of both recruitment professionals and Brookes alumni provide advice and unrivalled networking opportunities at this annual event. Afternoon speed-dating sessions with publishing companies allow students to find out more about careers in the industry. Publishers and recruitment agencies should contact Catherine Foley to be invited to attend:

catherine.foley@brookes.ac.uk

London Book Fair, 19 – 21 April 2010

The Oxford International Centre for Publishing Studies’ stand at the London Book Fair (Number O580) welcomes visitors. We will also be organizing four seminars: on journals publishing, the midlist in trade publishing, children’s publishing and ebooks. Contact Mary Malin, Business Development Manager, mmalin@brookes.ac.uk for appointments to talk about our services to publishers.

reading alive by producing titles that the public will buy (for example celebrity non-fiction) rather than titles that make a difference. Chris Brazier, co-editor of the *New Internationalist*, held the view that for his organization the ‘raison d’être’ is to make a difference, period. Sarah Totterdell, Head of the Policy and Practice Communications team at Oxfam, focused on how the company uses publishing to gain awareness of poverty and suffering through their new titles, *Ox-Tales*, launched in July 2009. Robert Sharp, campaigns manager for English PEN, summed it all up in his moving speech, arguing that we should have the belief that our ideas will influence the world and publish accordingly.’

Work experience and networking – the key to job offers

In seven months I have been fortunate to have three work experience placements, paid freelance work and ultimately multiple permanent job offers. The key for me has been, truly and genuinely, networking. With a bit of help from the staff in the publishing department at Oxford Brookes, who provide a wide range of work experience opportunities for students.

When I started the course I was very keen to get work experience. Early in the MA course, Brookes set up interviews with large publishing companies and open them to all Publishing MA students. I happily accepted a placement in the Rights department of HarperCollins, after one interview. I also did a placement at New Holland publishers in their editorial department over the winter holiday, having applied from an advert on the Brookes website. When spring term began I was still with HarperCollins, but was ready to gain experience

elsewhere. My Rights experience with HarperCollins helped me to get another Rights internship with OUP. While there, a classmate suggested I do some freelance work in the ELT New Media department because they could use the help. I freelanced until I started a casual contract in the same department. When word got around my office that I was applying for permanent positions with various publishers, I had a few people approach me with suggestions and contacts and even an offer to stay in the department on a fixed-term contract. Ultimately, after several interviews and a couple of job offers, I chose to take up a permanent position at OUP as an Assistant Production Editor.

What was great about the internships, apart from playing a large part in getting me a job, was that they allowed me to apply everything that I was learning in the course, and to experience different parts of a publishing company. I'd encourage anyone interested in



publishing to work in a variety of departments to see what they prefer and find which department is best fit for them. I would also suggest not staying too long at any one company while doing work experience. Rule of thumb, I would say, is 10 days – whether it's every day for two weeks, or spread out as one day a week for two and a half months. Whether you enjoy what you are doing or not, it's really important to get experience at different companies and in the end it will look better on your CV. Plus you'll make a lot of useful contacts.

Jennifer Lunsford

MA students visit Frankfurt Book Fair

Wide eyed and full of questions, the 35 travel-weary publishing Masters students embarked on what was to be their first true taste of the cut and thrust business world of publishing.

The Frankfurt Buchmesse is one of the most important dates in a publisher's calendar with more than 7,300 exhibitors from 100 countries, 299,000 visitors and over 10,000 journalists. It not only offered us a unique insight into the practical usage of publishing skills but also the opportunity to talk to those in the industry.

We were each given the opportunity to meet with some industry experts and really find out what went on at the Fair. It was difficult not to keep asking questions as they openly and warmly talked



about everything from their starts in the business to the effects of the recession on the Buchmesse this year. The appointments allowed us not just to be students looking in, but to be part of the experience.

People were as generous with their time as they were with their lists, catalogues and uncorrected proof copies of future books. Frankfurt was the most invaluable experience, particularly so early on in the course as it allowed us to see what we have learnt so far in context. As well as group bonding and a little adventure, it gave us each a real taste of the world we are entering and nothing could be more exciting than that.

*MA Publishing student
Rosanne Dawkins*