

Report on MiPA General Meeting—December 14, 2021

20 Participating on Zoom

The Holiday Party

Generally, we just had fun. But several valuable discussions came up and are highlighted below.



Sensitivity Readers

Colin brought up his difficult experience with using a Native American reader to check his alternative history book about the US Dakota War of 1962. We will have a panel discussing this in our May session called “We Need Diverse Books.”

Literary Lawyers

Jennifer discussed her problems with a cookbook which had references to Martha Stewart and a picture of Winnie the Pooh in the background. A lawyer spoke to MiPA once in the past ([David Koehser](#)) about copyright issues. Colin had a good experience with that lawyer. He was quick, but his cost is unknown yet. Paul recommends using stock photography when possible to avoid this problem.

Zoom Backgrounds

We discussed how to use background photos or movies during Zoom meetings. It’s under the video icon in the lower left of the zoom screen and you can just add your own picture to the listing.

Groups

Kelly Pratt discussed groups she coaches which are not connected to Facebook. She created a “village” where members can put good things out into the world. It uses an app called “[Mighty Platforms](#)” which enables hosting private networks.

Editing

Kristin described her problems editing with an author who turns out a new book every 6 weeks, but who doesn't listen well. She generally publishes "speculative fiction" but has been afraid to use the term. Paul said the term was fine.

Audiobooks

Judith introduced the subject of audiobooks. They represent about 15% of the market but are growing fast. There was a good discussion in our January meeting this year ([notes here](#)). But don't try it unless the paper version is selling well already.

ARCs

Are printed advanced reader copies (ARCs) still needed or is digital enough? The group thought that print versions might get more attention, so stick with them unless directed differently.

Marketing Services

Sybil asked if services like [Book Baby](#) are useful for e-book publishing. Ingram/Spark is different from Book Baby, because it is the broadest general service. [Smashwords](#) is similar to Book Baby. They all expect about a 50% discount as retailers. Paul mentioned a 4 to 1 rule: the retail price should be 4 times production cost to cover all middlemen. Finding a good niche is key.

Editing

Judith described her editing work at [Brenner Editorial](#).

Author Counseling, Where to Start

Tell the authors to do research on publishers, search for one who is in the right genre. Remind the authors that publishers do not do marketing, that the author will have to do that. If it is nonfiction, have them write a proposal. They will not be miraculously "discovered." Developmental editing is very important before going to line editing. Get in a writers group and have several people critique the book. Also, save your money so you will have enough to pay for all the help you will need. Research the genre. Find the right path for your book: self-publish, small publisher, hybrid publisher, agent, or traditional (top 5) famous publisher.

Rewriting a Book

If you change less than 20%, it's the same ISBN. If there are major changes, it will need a developmental edit—that's a new edition. You might want a new title if the original got bad reviews.

Digital Marketing Firms

There are firms that say they will do the social marketing for you. A MiPA meeting focused on Amazon advertising and Colin tried it, but his ROI was awful (see below for Joan's experience). Then he tried [Adverio.io](#) and there are multiple similar sites, but he doesn't have results yet. Adverio sets up a campaigns at \$30-50 per day per book.

Jennifer has hired someone to do social media advertising, and it is working. She is focusing on direct sales. She is doing an 8-week campaign which is expensive, in the \$40 per day range, and her social media man is working mostly with Instagram and Facebook and currently honing in. Jennifer is filling orders and is breaking even so far. She also mentioned the case of [Puppy Dogs and Ice Cream Publishing](#) which does direct selling online and is making a fortune. People who are not familiar with books often struggle with sales.

Joan is in the Amazon Ad School ([Bryan Cohen](#)) for a one-time fee and that has led to a lot of good help. She is making more on sales than it is costing for ads. There are three coaching calls per week. She highly recommends this.

M. J. Rose also is an option. She helps authors through the [AuthorBuzz](#) site.

Nancy recommended [Amy Collins](#), who spoke at MiPA once. She is from Rochester NY. [New Shelves books](#) has great information. Maybe we should invite her to talk to MiPA again.

Book Launches

Nancy talked about her recent experience at a successful book launch. The launch movie is at [Breathe the Change](#) which was broadcast around the world, and developed unexpected interest in Spain. Zoom launches sometimes have more who sign up than show up. Colin planned games and other attractions at his launch. He sold about 15 books.

Suzanne says her online launches haven't led to as many sales. Attending in person works better because those attending are more motivated.

Carol suggested that the reason people physically come is to get an autographed copy and talk directly to the author. They have traveled and don't want to come back empty-handed.

Online does enable email follow up. Harvesting the names is useful. Zoom meetings can reach into other states, but follow-up is necessary.

Consider using Eventbrite as well. Some people search for events they might like. There are other advantages as well, like charging for attendance. They do take a cut.

[Crowdcast](#) is another option that Colin uses which has reached people throughout the world. He allows people to donate, and that has worked. Crowdcast fees range from \$29 per month and up—more expensive than Zoom. It also acts as a media site for all the speaker videos.

MiPA used Zoom webinar for the Gala, with a plugin that allowed donations.

Keep trying things! These are strange times.

Grants

Two or three attendees described grants they had received. There is a lot of competition, but applying is worth a little effort. Funding can come for odd reasons, like Polish recipes in the story.