

## Report on MiPA General Meeting—April 12, 2022

# How Publishers Can Collaborate with Regional Bookseller Associations



**Moderator—Stephanie Williams**

**Panelists—Heather Duncan, Larry Law,  
and Carrie Obry**

**Stephanie Williams** is a MiPA board member and the director of Wayne State University Press in Detroit, MI.

**Heather Duncan, Executive Director, Mountains & Plains Independent Booksellers Association**

Heather began her career at the Tattered Cover Book Store in Denver, Colorado. Over her 29 years at the store she wore many hats, including bookseller, ordering department associate, corporate sales rep, and director of marketing and events. While at the Tattered Cover, Heather served on the Mountains & Plains Independent Booksellers Association Advisory Council, then on the Board of Directors. She left the Tattered Cover in January 2018 to join MPIBA as executive director.

**Larry Law, Executive Director, Great Lakes Independent Booksellers Association**

Larry began his bookselling career briefly at B&N and then worked in various positions at Anderson's Bookshop, an independent bookstore in Illinois. In addition to his duties

at GLIBA, Larry is currently on the board of ArtBar, a local art collective that focuses on showcasing local artists.

### **Carrie Obry, Executive Director Midwest Independent Booksellers Association**

Carrie has had a love affair with books her whole life. In grade school, her favorite time of day was SQUIRT (Super Quiet Uninterrupted Independent Reading Time). In college, she studied literature and creative writing at a small school in Wisconsin, then headed to the big city to get a master's degree in literary theory from New York University. While there, she began a career in publishing, working as a copyeditor and acquisitions editor as she moved to Chicago and then Minneapolis working for independent publishers. Carrie believes independent bookstores are that "great good place" (to quote Ray Oldenburg), essential to creating vibrant communities and sustaining literary culture.

### **How to support booksellers**

Working with small and independent presses is key. It allows for more depth and breath to book selections. Many large presses can lose minority voices, and smaller publishers are often a wellspring of diversity.

### **Programs offered to publishers**

Carrie's associate offers trade shows to represent publishers, one in particular is a joint show with Larry's association. Heather also has trade shows such as FallCon and emphasizes that there are other associations with more regional reach. Larry adds that they do virtual events, bookstore event programs, and has online databases for publishers. They all support affiliate members.

### **Q and A Session**

Q1. Can you talk a little more about your awards programs? Are they only nominated by booksellers?

A1. Heather answered that their book awards are public facing. They accept nominations from publishers and booksellers and have public voting.

Q2. How can an author support bookstores during an online book launch? Would a regional association promote a regional book launch to their members?

A2. The panelists all note that their members have access to their events calendar, and an author can add events to their page for an additional fee. There are different opportunities depending on the association.

Q3. Do regional associations market at ALA?

A3. All panelists said that they have librarian members in their associations but they don't market directly to them.

Q4. Can you recommend some distributors for small publishers?

A4. They suggest small press distribution such as IPG or Ingram.

Q5. Does IPG do any direct outreach or distribution to your associations?

A5. All panelists say yes, they are in constant contact with IPG.

Q6. Are you familiar with DartFrog? Do many indie booksellers rely on DartFrog for acquisitions?

A6. Heather and Carrie have not heard of this; Larry was familiar but has not heard of anyone ever using it.

Q7. Are there ways publishers can support independent booksellers with their audiobooks?

A7. Heather strongly recommended Libro.fm and says that the vast majority of booksellers use that platform.

Last piece of advice from the panelists: get a blurb from an independent bookseller for your books!