

# Expanding into Audio and Video Publishing Panel

**Panelists: Adam Sidwell and Melissa Dalton Martinez**

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**Adam Sidwell:** Hello attendees of the LDS PMA virtual conference. We are happy to be here on the panel for Expanding into Audio and Video Publishing: Post Film, Games, Books, etc. Cross Branded Licensing. I am your host and moderator today, and we also have with us Melissa.

**Melissa Dalton Martinez:** Hi, I'm Melissa, [melissa.murkeyness.com](http://melissa.murkeyness.com).

**Adam Sidwell:** We're really glad to be here and glad to have all of you attending and look forward to your questions after the panel. I'll start off with a brief introduction, Melissa, do you want to go first.

**Melissa Dalton Martinez:** Sure. So I am somebody that's worked in the publishing industry on and off for the last 20 years. I started actually in film. I am the person behind the scenes when it comes to the marketing and helping with sales and distribution.

I also host a show called the book break where I interview authors and artists and other people in the publishing industry.

With the book break, I get to do monthly TVm book, recommendation segments. I work with different TV stations and radio stations in Utah.

I do a lot of book reviews and I also do private consulting with authors and help them with their marketing and distribution channels. So I'm all over the place, but behind the scenes, because I'm actually not an author.

**Adam Sidwell:** Really glad to have you on the panel and with thank you for that introduction. And glad and excited about what we're going to talk about today. So, My name is Adam Sidwell. I am an author, a publisher, and an animator. I think that sums it up.

I will share the screen while I talk. maybe this will be interesting to you folks at home. This is a demonstration of my demo reel, some of the animation that I've done for various companies like Industrial Light And Magic, Sony Pictures, What is Digital.

Working on movies like King Kong and I, Robot and Transformers and some video game commercials: Warcraft, Tron, various other films for years.

Working in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New Zealand, all over the place. In the past few years, I moved to Utah. Where I've set up In Earnest Future House Publishing, which is my publishing company. We have over 50 titles. We have distribution with Workman Publishing, which is the largest independent distributor in the United States, the six largest publisher with over 100 billion dollars in sales, a year.

And so with with that we publish science fiction, fantasy and no grade books. For me, I'm excited about this panel and excited about this topic because this for me marries the two worlds of animation and film and publishing in in this genre space.

And recently, have launched Future House Studios. Which is a an animation and my own animation film company, which works in collaboration with you, Charles publishing to create animated content. That's exciting. We're actually, I'm actually broadcasting here from my offices, which are in the Go Films office. If you guys know Go Films. They do movies like Saints and Soldiers, Forever Strong. It's been it's been very cool to be in a collaborative environment here.

With that, we can start off with a discussion. I think for the first discussion points.

What I'd like to ask and you know there's there's just two of us, but maybe we can start off with, why go beyond the book? What are the advantages to cross branding to putting your content out in multiple formats? What is the reason for a publisher, an author, or an artist, to pursue those? Any thoughts on that, Melissa?

**Melissa Dalton Martinez:** Yes. So honestly, it's to make more money, right? Because, that's part of why you all do what you do.

I know part of it is, it's a passion and it's fun. And s,o being that it's a passionate. It's fun. It's also fun to see your art in other forms.

One of the format said I work with a lot is audio books. And so I think that's probably going to be your next most logical step. So if you have your paperback book and your eBook. The next most logical step is going to be audio.

Depending on how you publish, whether you self publish or you go with a big five or a medium or small publisher. There are a lot of different things that you should be looking at. So one of the things is: First, you're going to be looking at your contracts. When you are going in with a publisher, you need to make sure you are looking at your licensing rights. Because remember, you're not selling them your work, you're selling them a license to publisher work. So it's really important that you understand that.

So going into audio right now and I can share my screen with you guys because it just gives you something else to look at.

There are a lot of things growing in our industry. One of the most costly things about the publishing industry is change. I've worked in a lot of industries. Nothing changes faster and more often than the publishing industry. So if you want to stay relevant. You want to make sure that you're following that and paying attention to the trends.

And the biggest market that's growing the biggest is going to be audio. So let me just pull up my screen real quick. I can show you guys a couple things with audio books. Okay, I want to let me see.

**Adam Sidwell:** I think I've been very sure. Oh, great.

**Melissa Dalton Martinez:** Okay, here we go, so you guys can see my screen. What I wanted to show you with this is, like I said, audio books is the fastest growing market and publishing And there are really two main distributors. So if you are an indie published author or if you went traditional and you maintained your audio rights Then this is something that you need to be looking at. There are two main distributors. ACX and Find A Way Voices. Now there's some other little ones out there too. But these are kind of your two main ones.

The one that most people are familiar with is a ACX because they've been around the longest. ACX is the distributor for Audible, Amazon and iTunes. Those are the three platforms that they go to.

One of the things that you also want to keep in mind is there are new audio books coming out that are just on audio.

So the more dramatize stories that used to happen Back in just the radio days have actually come back. So when you are writing a story you can think about that in the sense of, is this going to be a traditional book or is this just going to be an audiobook because you can do a lot more with audio than used to be done, and most audio books are digital now and you know 10, 15, 20 years ago.

Even further back, we were seeing it first on tapes and then CDs and now it's almost all digital. Although you can still buy some CDs.

So the next one is Find A way Voices. You can still go through Find New Voices and get into all the same platforms as a ACX.

But then, as you can see there's a big list on here of a whole bunch of other platforms that Find Voices can get you on.

So now I have had people ask me before will do I have to go through. Find a way voices to get to all of those platforms because obviously as a distributor, they're going to take a cut of the royalties.

The answer is, some of them. Yeah, you do have to have a distributor, but others know you can directly go to these 20 different places and ask them if you can get on their platform and work with them. They all have different submission guidelines. So that's going to be one thing that you can do.

And I'm sure Adam can talk about this too, but When you're writing something just for audio. It may be a little bit different than when you're writing your regular story. So if you're doing something that's just going to be for audio and you're dramatizing it a bit.

Then you're going to be thinking about where you might be putting music where you might be putting sound effects.

Versus if you have a traditional book and you're expanding and just doing an audio book you're likely not adding all those extra special effects, you're just doing a narration of it.

So there's a couple little things on that. And I can go into those little bit more. Before I do that though, Adam, did you want to add anything to these to this.

**Adam Sidwell:** Well, you know, I think, I think, emphasizing the point that you know you probably aren't going to be doing the recording yourself. Your story exists in a story format that is self contained and its own its own piece of work, right? But this translation into audible is another another format that requires a somewhat different talent and skill set. You may have that skill set, but if you notice the subtleties of of audiobook recording, then you'll find out how difficult that really is. I got to do an audio book recording session with Emily James Card. She does a lot of recording of all sorts of audiobooks. You see, are all you see your name all over the place and has a very distinct voice.

And she took me into the recording booth and I was I was testing because I thought this would be so fun. I quickly realized how difficult that was to make your voice clear. Have the right amount of inflection, not be too over exuberant and not be too under exuberant; but, to flow with the words and it's a talent in itself.

**Melissa Dalton Martinez:** Absolutely.

**Adam Sidwell:** Well, I think, I think what's key is as an author as an artist, you want to think about how since your story is a product unto itself. But, this can also be changed into multiple products, you know, like the audio books.

**Melissa Dalton Martinez:** Yeah, absolutely.

Don't think of it as a game. Yeah, for sure, and remembering that you are the author and so you have a vision in your head of how you see your character speaking. Does your character have an accent? Does this does your book come from different perspectives? So you can do an audio book where you have a male voice and a female voice or you can have one voice do all of your characters. Those are things that you can consider when you're doing your audio book.

But with a ACX and Find A Way Voicesm they do have platforms already in place where you can go and find your narrators.

You can post that you want to have an audition. You can post what you want. You can tell them this is the genre. I need somebody that can do these kinds of accents male, female, whatever it is that you need.

But if you're not a professional. I really don't recommend that you narrate your own book unless you have professional help. So one time that it may be a great idea for you to narrate your own book is if it's nonfiction.

However, you need professional help to do it if you don't have the equipment. If you don't have the background.

You need to make sure that you do it professionally. It's kind of one of those things. If you're going to do it, do it well, give quality.

So if you're going out there and you're trying to find somebody and you're wondering how you pay, there you have two ways. One, you're going to pay them up front. You can do a mix. It's up to you and the narrator, but the two most common ways are going to be you pay up front. You are paying per finished production hour. You're not going to pay if it takes them 30 hours to complete your book, that doesn't matter how much you pay them. What matters is the finished product. So that's the most traditional way and you can do a royalty split.

For some people they choose the royalty split because they don't have a following and they're kind of breaking into it.

But for those that have a really great following doing a royalty split may really not be the best option for you. Because you could lose quite a bit of money that way. So you've got to look at your market and your following.

The other thing is, I recommend you go to their website so that you get a feel for how it works. But both of these distributors have exclusive and non exclusive royalties.

For a ACX you're looking at 40% royalty plus 100 free audio books If you go exclusive. Non exclusive 25% royalty and no free audiobook codes.

Look at that, how much you really think you're going to push these other markets, is it worth it, is it not? You have a seven year commitment with a ACX. So, if you sign up with them, they will be your distributor for seven years. Now if you decide in the beginning, you go exclusive and later. You want to go non exclusive. That's okay. They will let you change, but only once.

So if you're exclusive and you go to non exclusive you cannot then go back to exclusive at least as of today. Who knows, they may change that. Find A Way voices, their royalties are different

depending on who the platform is. So, if it's audiobooks.com, that's one royalty. If it's Kobo that's another royalty. That's only a one year distribution agreement.

Another really really big difference is a ACX sets your price for you. You don't get a set your price. So for some people they really don't like that. So you're putting in your book and you don't even know what your audiobook price is going to be. With Find A Way you are setting it. So the other thing, because I'm a major marketing person that I'll say on this. You have more marketing opportunities. If you are not exclusive to ACS. For example, you can do an audio Book Bub feature deal.

Audio books is now with Book Bub through chirp. But if you are only with a ACX you can't do it.

So there are a number of different things. There are quite a few pros and cons that you really need to consider if that's the route that you're going to go.

Audio books is the fastest growing market. So it's definitely something, if you're not already doing it, you should seriously look into it. Especially Right now, where the world is a little bit unknown with Covid. At the very beginning of quarantine audio book sales went down only because those that were driving and listening to their books stopped. But after about six weeks the sales went right back up again.

And now they're even higher than they were before quarantine. So just watch the market, and that's a big one audio books. Back to Adam for the next thing.

**Adam Sidwell:** So thanks, Melissa. Thanks for diving deep into that. Let's take a few steps back and look at some of the overview of the other ways you can exercise your rights and build cross branded properties.

You know, we've listed here on poverty bit quite a bit. Thank you, Melissa, video publishing plus film, Games, Books etc across branded licensing ectera. So let's jump into film and TV for a little bit. This is, of course, I think many authors dreams is to have their book and see it up on the silver screen or see it up on you know on TV. There's so many opportunities for content formats you have Netflix with the long form seasonal format. Where you can do you know 10 episodes, which can equal two or three films worth of content or more.

You have the 20 episodes seasons. You have multiple seasons where you know there's there's so many opportunities to tell stories in different ways. You have Quivvy which is the short form content started by a number of major filmmakers and studios. Which is designed to be like a five

minute digestible content that would be is basically paid youtube. Youtube, of course, is a huge way to exercise that content and have it be seen.

So there's there's many opportunities to get on the screen. Now, not all of these opportunities are going to be profitable or allow you to exercise rights in such a way that it's going to make you any money. And not end up costing you money in the end. So, you know, for example, you could spend hundreds of thousands of dollars, creating your own film or or series of your book and put it up on YouTube. But, YouTube watchers do not pay for content because it's, there's so much free content that you're competing with there.

You could also try to create or shoot something on your own and then sell it to a major network, but if you don't have those inroads it's very difficult to do that. Usually, when a TV or film is made, it's put into what's called development. The development phase is when someone with those avenues, you know, a film producer or someone with access to funding is looking for content. They say, let's develop this first I want to see. Oh, you've got a book. Right? And they're they're interested in the story/ Now having a book as significant I sat down with one of the executives at DreamWorks recently. We were pitching properties from Future House Publishing. He said, we get a lot of pitches in here, of course, but there's something about it being a book that makes it real that gives us extra interest in it. Part of the reason is because that book is copyrighted. It's a product, it's clear who's whose the ownership. Who owns that book.

It's clear what's in that story already. And that's it. Also, there's some certain amount of data that can correspond to who's read it? Who's liked it? Who reviewed it? What has audience reaction have been? Right now in the film industry, books are sort of the beginning of the discovery phase to decide which films are going to be greenlit. Because it's so much cheaper to put a book out for a few thousand dollars versus a film which can be several million dollars or \$100 for a blockbuster \$200 billion or more. So this goes into the development phase.

Of course, you know what, what's helpful is if you partner with an agency or a publisher. If you don't have those inroads yourself. Who has the ability to exercise some of those rights and help you pursue them.

**Melissa Dalton Martinez:** Say something with that.

**Adam Sidwell:** Yeah, please.



**Melissa Dalton Martinez:** When you guys are looking at getting into film. One of the things that you need to watch for are your contracts.

One of the things I work with a lot of folks on is helping negotiate their contracts.

I've seen some really bad contracts and some really good contracts. You just want to make sure that you're watching what you are able to do so, like Adam mentioned. If you're with a traditional publisher, they might be able to help you. They might totally be able to help you.

But are they going to? So you've got to ask yourself these things. Look at your contract with your publisher to see if you get to keep the licensing rights for your book or if they get to. If they do get to, what does that mean for you? How are you going to get paid for that? Because if you get paid based on the profit of the movie, you'll never see a dollar. Because, there are so many ways that a movie can not be profitable. Even if it was a blockbuster and made millions and millions of dollars.

So you've got to watch that. Like if you get an executive producer credit. You're having a much better time making money. So watch your contracts.

I know Adams done a ton of these contracts himself. So I'm sure he can tell you a lot, but watch your contracts. This sounds, maybe a little paranoid; but, don't just trust people. Do your homework and get an attorney to help you with your contracts.

**Adam Sidwell:** Absolutely, because you want to understand when you've created a story what rights you are selling essentially and entering into an agreement with. A lot of times when you're in the publishing contract phase, you're going to be just allowing the publisher to shop, the rights and have those film rights. The the many different aspects of that film contract would probably be negotiated later. Because there's so many different Deal points that occur.

And you It's up to you if you want to allow that publisher to have those film rights or if you decide that you want to retain them.

Let me do an example. So As I was headed out to pitch. I had a number of executives asking me, well, what, what are the future properties that are interesting? And so I have to look down my list and say, okay, what is it that—Are there any of these were the author has requested to retain the film rights. If they have then I can't pitch those right? Because that author keeps those film rights.

We make sure that you know we have those discussions with authors like did you want us to pitch these as film and TV, which we do quite regularly.

And so that's another way that you have to understand that all these formats. Your story can exist in or are possible. We partnered with an agency out of LA that represents a lot of artists and a lot of writers that do screenplays specifically. We said hey you know what we'd like you to represent all of our books and properties as we take them around. They they've been wonderful about connecting us with setting up meetings and having those discussions and part of what happens is there's a lot of pavement pounding that nobody gets paid for, a lot of time spent, you know, flying here having lunch meetings here renting the car spending the time in the hotel.

You know days at a time meeting with so as many people as possible to say, hey, we're gonna have 100 meetings and maybe out of that one of them will result in some small deal.

And then you're hoping for a larger deal along the way. But as a publisher, you know, it's for us. We look at this as like, okay, how can we use all of these different formats and categories and make the book, have you know, extended as far as possible. We've also done the reverse.

We partnered with Arrow Storm Entertainment and took the Mythica Series, which has been very popular on Kickstarter, a fantasy series.

Aristotle, actually a local company, Jason follow runs it and does a fantastic job making all these movies.

And we said, hey, there's a lot of fans out here. We write fantasy. We'd love to do a fantasy novelization of this. Well, we launched that on Kickstarter, because that's where those fans that was their natural habitat; where they were, they were normally. It was quickly funded. It was one of the easiest Kickstarter to be done. We really enjoyed that because there was already a fan base that was hungry for more material in that story. I think that's a really good example.

For ways that we can think of how to cross ran across license. So another deal that we did that, we really have enjoyed is also somewhat of a reverse deal which is The Super Dungeon Derives. Super Dungeon was a Kickstarter, war game that has sold multiple millions of dollars on Kickstarter. They have a ravenous fan base internationally all over Facebook. There's a lot of people who are just totally into Super Dungeon. They make these really cool miniatures that you can see that people love to paint. That's board game community discusses the board game. They get together and they talk about it.

They licensed with, we license from them the rights to do a novelization for the books. So we launched that and we actually launched with it miniatures that were attached to the books. So, all these fans love the miniatures. They came bought the miniatures. They bought the books. It was a five book series. There was a number of Future House Publishing authors that we that we all got together and wrote. I wrote one of the books as well, Danielle and David west. Diego Boom, Christopher Keen.

Did I get everybody there, Zach Strickland. I think it was five.

And we all wrote that series, and it was it was absolutely a blast and everyone was very happy with how it turned out. So, now we're doing a second series in partnering with them. But what was what was key there. And I think that's the take home for authors is that that existed as a board game, but there was basically a whole story that needed to be told. They were ecstatic. When we reached out to them and said, Hey, here's what we could do.

**Melissa Dalton Martinez:** So, I just want to add to that that. There is a whole generation of authors that have made big names for themselves writing books based on TV shows and movies and things like that. Like if you're into SiFi, you're probably familiar with Kevin J. Anderson, who is really well known for his X Files books and Star Wars books and Dune books.

Those are really great opportunities if if you're able to get in touch with the estate that manages those things and make that connection like Adam Messang. Those are big. I mean like Timothy Zahn. He's known for his Star Wars books and Keith DECandido. I mean these are big guys that that's kind of how they started really getting their names out there. They do other books and everything now to and they're excellent writers.

And so I I don't want anyone to think there's anything wrong with that because like Adam just mentioned, there are so many really cool things that you can do. Taking it from the games. Because, I mean, even if you just like...

I hope, I think, Adam still talk about video games. But if you think about the world building that has to go on in a video game that's huge.

There are a lot of video game writers out there that look specifically for authors to help them develop their world for the video games. Because that's a big thing. You've got to have that background to have a really well done game.

**Adam Sidwell:** Absolutely. Absolutely. You know if you're an author and you're just starting out, or you have few books published and you're listening this and feeling overwhelmed.

I think, you know, the key takeaway is that you want to form partnerships and alliances along the way. You go to the cons. Talk to people. Find out what they're doing. Find out what filmmakers around you are doing. Find out if there's an agent that can represent you in the right way. Find out who has had book deals out there and how they got those book deals and what they did. Because you know...

I think the trick is as authors, we tend to want to go it alone. You know, we're a lone wolf that hunker down and our caves and we write something. Then we want to just be able to throw it out the window and everybody goes, oh! You know, it's so wonderful. Right? This is how publishing developed in the first place. Publishers, and agencies. and Indies all work on as a collection of relationships and avenues and conduits for you to help to help you get your work out there.

You know, I see this, even if you decide to go the indie route or you're an indie author, they partner with other authors to promote their work and talk about it. You've being at this conference is absolutely great, because this is one of the steps. And one of the things along the way to learn and meet with others about how you can succeed.

By forming those partnerships in those relationships.

**Melissa Dalton Martinez:** I agree, and thinking outside the box is something that will only help your career. So it's not even... If thinking a movie deal is, is not something you're interested in right now. I think that's totally fine. But there are other avenues as a writer. I mean, look at magazines. Look at short story contests.

Look at getting involved in an anthology look at graphic novels. I mean, there are just so many things that you can get involved with.

Partnering with someone and getting an agent if your plans are going to do bigger projects. Look at getting an agent very seriously because those are absolutely invaluable resources to help you in continuing growing your career.

**Adam Sidwell:** Now, another example is that you see right now there's a growing interest in web comics that are being developed for TV.

Those are a way for creators to express their worlds and share them.

You know, low cost way and for analytics to be attached to them, like how many of us are coming here? How many, how many people are interested in this? You know film studios and TV studios are taking notice. So, there's some real possibilities there. Those web comics then are getting publishing deals.

I think the idea of the film adaptation of the book is glorious and wonderful, but it's not the only method. There's so many different ways of adapting your work.

So you'll get out there and find out about those and talk to people who have been down that road.

**Melissa Dalton Martinez:** I agree, and remember that you guys are all in this together. I mean, a lot of times you're like, Oh, you're my competition, actually.

People are always going to pick up another book and read another book or watch another film or play another game. So really, you guys are in this together. So work together, talk, and don't be afraid to stretch yourself a little bit. If somebody asks you to help with a project or being an anthology, or maybe help with the screenplay.

Those are things that you should look at saying yes to. If you can say yes, say yes.

**Adam Sidwell:** That's great advice. I think that's great advice. I'm moving on time here.

**Melissa Dalton Martinez:** Let's yeah we're almost done with our time.

**Adam Sidwell:** We're almost done. So let me touch on video games real briefly, since that was listed on here. There's a number of video games that have been adapted from books.

I think if I remember correctly, The Witcher came from a book which is a massively successful video game. It is now a Netflix series.

We have a number of authors who started in video games. We have Cameron Dayton and Mickey Nielsen, who wrote some of the books that we published at Future Calls.

Everything's written Either Walker. He was part of the story development at Blizzard, on Call of Duty, a number of other places. He basically consults for story.

And he was part of the initial concept of developing Infinity Blade, which was a mobile, video game app which Chair Entertainment requested Brandon Sanderson to write for.

And you see that some of that cross promotion occurring there. Cameron is written like as Ether Walker. You see that his video game world or video game mentality as developed in coalesced into this very cool world in this story. And now his fans of his working games have come to find that book.

The same thing with Ricky Nelson. He was one of the heads of story development at Blizzard Entertainment for years. He went on to write some other books where he's doing a lot of cross branding and licensing. He wrote Ridge Runners, which is a space opera book that we published. Then he's gone on to write a number of things that are in other people's worlds and creations. Because it, it builds exposure and gets his name out there. And it's another opportunity.

**Melissa Dalton Martinez:** And you mentioned Brandon Sanderson and one of his popular series is Mistborn. For any Brandon fans, you're going to be familiar with, with Mistborn. There's a board game, I actually have. I was just looking at my shelf.

**Adam Sidwell:** You got a copy?

**Melissa Dalton Martinez:** An entire series of Mistborn; but, this is for the video game.

So this is Crafty that actually puts it together. I have five books up there on my shelf that are all about the game.

**Adam Sidwell:** So for game.

**Melissa Dalton Martinez:** Uh huh.

No, this one is, yeah, so this is the adventure game. It's a player's guide and Mistborn world resource. So there are there are so many things. So I mean, first he had the series. And then he had a game and then there's a series of books that go with the games, right, so

**Adam Sidwell:** It never stops.

**Melissa Dalton Martinez:** It doesn't. So there are just so many opportunities. So just keep that in mind. Fun stuff.

**Adam Sidwell:** Excellent. Well, thank you. We appreciate everyone watching and hope that you learned something good today. Be sure to send us questions and we'll answer them. And to the best of our ability.

You know, you can always reach out to me at Future House, [FutureHousePublishing.com](http://FutureHousePublishing.com). Get a hold of us on social media or some of our editors are at the conference and regimens here. And stay in touch.

**Melissa Dalton Martinez:** Yeah. And if you want to reach out to me, you can reach out to me to [TheBookBreak.com](http://TheBookBreak.com), or [Melissa@thebookbreak.com](mailto:Melissa@thebookbreak.com), or [info@thebookbreak.com](mailto:info@thebookbreak.com). I also work with Ashley Writing top. So you got all kinds of places you can find us.

**Adam Sidwell:** Excellent. Well, thank you, Melissa, for being on the panel and thanks everyone for watching and enjoy your conference. Thanks. Bye.