

Inner Workings of a Publisher Panel: How Publishers Decide What to Publish

Panelists: Marci Monson, Angela Johnson, Dave Kimball, Ashley Gebert, and Chris Schoebinger

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Angela Johnson: Good morning everybody, and welcome to the Inner Workings of a Publisher Panel: How Publishers Decide What to Publish. Today we are going to discuss publishing techniques with you, and we'll just start by introducing ourselves. Marci, would you like to start?

Marci Monson: Yeah! I'm Marci Monson; I work for Gibbs Smith Publishing. We do children's, cookbooks, design, coffee-table books.

And I've been here since September. I'm pretty new to publishing. I worked at the Church for ten years on LDS.org, and so I've touched every piece of that website. And then I just felt like I needed a new challenge, and I went to the Denver Publishing Institute, and then I started here at Gibbs Smith last September.

Angela Johnson: Great. Nice to meet you. Dave?

Dave Kimball: Hello, my name is Dave Kimball. I am the director of brand and product marketing at Deseret Book.

In my role, I get to sit on product development committees for books, music, film, and lifestyle products. So I get to have my fingers in a lot of different things. And I've been at Deseret Book, I'm just hitting nine years, right now. I have the great pleasure of working with Mr. Chris Schoebinger, as well, who is also on this panel.

Angela Johnson: Alright. Thanks. Chris?

Chris Schoebinger: Yeah. My name is Chris Scheobinger, I have been in the book and publishing industry for about thirteen years, and I am the publishing director currently at Shadow Mountain Publishing. I work with just a fantastic product development team, and design team, and editorial team, and we are, ultimately we're looking to take a product from conception to consumer, and in all those processes along the way. And we are we're the essentially the national arm of Deseret Company. So we're, we don't publish necessarily LDS content, but we always publish family-friendly content, anything from fiction to nonfiction to cookbooks to memoirs. A little bit of everything. And we have a small team, but we're doing well.

Angela Johnson: Great, thank you! And Ashley?

Ashley Gebert: I'm an editor at Covenant Communications. We publish all sorts of LDS nonfiction. We also have a lot of fiction: suspense, historical romance, contemporary romance; and we publish a small amount of children's books every year.

I work with about twenty veteran authors, and I also manage all of the submissions, and I'm part of our writing quality committee. So I'm very involved in our acceptance process.

Angela Johnson: Great. And I'm Angela Johnson. I work at Cedar Fort Publishing and Media, and I am the acquisitions manager.

So we like to look for LDS nonfiction, and we do quite a few children's books, usually. And then we're also looking for fiction books more in the realm of Regency romance and looks like that.

Okay. So I guess we'll just start out with the first question, and it's . . . Let's talk about the finances that go into publishing books. You know, obviously, you've got paperback or hardback and ebooks. So what kind of finances go into that? Who wants to start?

Dave Kimball: Could you clarify the question? What do you mean by finances? Like . . . yeah, I'm not sure exactly what you're asking.

Angela Johnson: So, from what I can tell, we're wanting to talk about the cost of a publisher: what it takes to take a manuscript from acceptance to a finished product.

Chris Schoebinger: I guess I'm ready to give maybe just some thoughts. I mean, every publisher has a publishing margin, or a, you know, profitability percentage that they want to hit.

And there are a lot of key areas that go into that, everything from, you know, like you said, format, page count, MSRP (the manufacturer's suggested retail price). It's going to be off the royalties. It's going to be any bells and whistles that are put into the product. And so all things have to be considered. And so when an author, for example, I think it's important for an author to know Who they're writing for, and the genre they're writing for, obviously, because like for example I'll give you one example of the genre: in children's, the MSRP for children's fiction books has a ceiling. And so if you submit a children's book that is 600 pages, and I have a ceiling on the MSRP, that's going to be a problem. And it's not going to work in my financial model.

I'm either going to just disregard it, because I figure you don't know the market, or I'm going to think, okay, well, it's such a good story. But if I cut it down by 50%, is still going to work? So again, that's just one example of how a publisher has to look at every piece of the puzzle and determine if this can be profitable, if this can be a win-win for both.

Dave Kimball: Yeah, at Deseret Book we always say that, or something that I always say, is that the only reason Deseret Book exists is to help people, and the model by which we help people has to be self-sustaining, and so we're in an odd space where we're trying to publish content that is religious in nature and helps the most amount of people, and we also have to sell it. So there has to be marketability to it, like Chris said. And one factor that is really important is you can accept a slimmer margin if the sales potential is bigger, right? Because at the end of the day, it's the dollar amount that keeps the lights on in the building and that pays salaries and that pays editors and acquisition managers to be able to help authors through this process. So, as Chris said, you're not going to have a 600 page children's book, because it's not going to work. And you might have this really inventive idea for this really elaborate book that has all these special features with, you know, Swiss army knife on the back or whatever. And so it may cost a lot. But if the sales potential is there and if you can prove that there's an audience for it, you might be able to accept a slimmer margin.

But that's not guaranteed. And so I think the key point in this, as Chris said, is you have to know your audience. You have to know who you're writing for, and you have to be able to do a job for those people that they need done, that they're willing to pay for.

Ashley Gebert: Something that goes into our discussion a lot is how much a certain author's been making on their other books.

So if there's a book that hasn't been doing very well, and they submit a new book, we have to consider, you know, how well it did on the last one. Did it meet our expectations? Did it exceed

them? So that's really a big deciding factor in how much effort we put into the book, too if we do accept it: we might cut down editorial hours and that kind of thing to adjust it.

Dave Kimball: Yeah, marketing spend: I mean, speaking from a marketing perspective, marketing spend goes into a lot of it as well. I mean, those margin dollars have to pay for the overhead costs of the editors and, you know, like we said, the acquisition managers, but also we have to pay for marketing costs. And so one of the things you run into all the time is that if a book takes off, it's because the content was great. And if a book doesn't do well, it's because the marketing stunk.

And some of that's true. And some of that's not. It's a marriage of both. And so you have to be wise, not only with your content, but how you talk about your content as well. And there has to be a great marriage between the content and the way it's presented to the customer, in order for that profitability to be there.

Angela Johnson: Definitely one of the things I'm hearing from this whole discussion is that there are expectations for authors, as well, with working with the publishing company in order to market their book. So if the author wrote a great book, and they left it to the publishing company to do everything for them with marketing, and they didn't brand themselves, then that puts more costs on to the publishing company, which in turn could mean that the book didn't sell as well.

And then, in the end, their next manuscript might not be accepted, or perhaps not as much work would be put into getting that next manuscript out. So authors, they have to learn how to brand themselves. So as publishers, how do you help authors to understand that process of marketing and building their audience? Oh, Marci, you can go first.

Marci Monson: Well, I was just gonna add to that that if an author, on their first book, proves that they're willing to get out there and sell themselves as much as possible, their advance on their second book will probably be a little higher, because we will be a little more willing to say, you can have this much money because you've proved that you're willing to travel to go to bookstores and do that kind of thing. So it can help you with your second book if you're really willing to sell yourself on your first book.

Ashley Gebert: I was just going to say that we have a publicist, Amy Parker, who does a really fantastic job of talking to authors before they have each one of their books published. And she will talk to them about their social media presence, and different tactics, so that they're aware of what their options are. And they go through different strategies of what's going to work best for them and what they're most comfortable with. And sometimes, if we're a little bit on the fence

about a manuscript, we might have her talk to the author beforehand, about how willing they would be to put a lot of effort into their marketing. And that could be a deciding factor on whether we decide to accept it or not.

Chris Schoebinger: I just want to echo what Marci and Ashley said. I think we've come to a place in publishing, that unless an author has their own marketing plan, they're less likely to be published. And I see that more and more now.

You know, if you're a writer and you want to be a writer and you're looking at that seriously, one of the first places to start is, what does your social media platform look like? Are you doing things to help build and brand yourself, now, before you're even published? And Yeah, if I'm looking at two manuscripts, and I like them both, but I only have room for one, but one of them has this following and the other one doesn't really, well, I'm going with that one.

So yeah, for sure. I think that's becoming more and more attractive for publishers, and almost essential.

Angela Johnson: Definitely. So you brought up the author having a marketing plan. What kind of things do you like to see in the author's plan when you're evaluating their manuscript?

Marci Monson: I'll give a real life example of that. Right now we have a manuscript that we've been talking about, that we all like the concept, we like, for the sample chapter we like, you know, a lot of the things that she said. But her marketing plan is kind of like, well, I'll post on Instagram about it, and I'll send an email or two. When even if she had come and said, these are the accounts I'm going to target.

I'm going to post weekly. You know, like an actual solid plan of, "Here are goals and, you know, points I'm going to hit along the way," rather than just being like, "Well, I'll talk about it," we probably would move forward if she had something a little stronger. But right now, we may not.

Dave Kimball: Yeah, I think for us, that's absolutely key. It's about, you know, listing who you know, and who you're willing to go after, and I don't want it to seem like you have to know everyone, and you have to be an expert marketer in order to be successful. But you have to be willing to think through what assets do you have at your fingertips, and what are you willing to do to learn to get more? Who are you willing to reach out to, and how can you do that? I think that's a really key component. I mean, I—Just two quick points. I think one, a lot of times it takes a while for an author to build credibility as an author, and so publishers have to take some chances on some relatively unknown people, expecting that the first book isn't going to do very

well. If they know that they have a second or third book, that has great potential as well. So that's one way to be forward thinking about what are your next few projects.

And then the second point totally escaped my mind. So it probably wasn't worth sharing. If it comes back, I will let you know. All right.

Ashley Gebert: I think with our fiction, we tell our authors a lot that it's just really important to market yourself, even more than your books, because titles can be temporary, but readers will really resonate with authors who will message them back on comments on Facebook and who are really interactive with their fan base.

And just posting about regular everyday things or jokes about your life can really make authors feel like real people that their readers can be friends with.

And that's huge. I've seen a lot of authors do that really, really well, where they're just friends with all of their fans, and their fans will eat up their books because they just love that person.

Dave Kimball: Yeah, so the point that I remembered, it goes right along with that: you have to have a purpose for why people want to follow you, and it can't just be, "I want to be an author. I want to write a book. I want to be famous. I want to make a bunch of money because I'm an author." No, I—Especially at Deseret Book, it has to be about, "I want to do good for people. And here's how I can use my unique skill-set in order to do good for people." And then, you know, as Ashley was saying, when they post on social media about relatively mundane things, people can see in their lives, they're actually trying to do good, that they're not necessarily perfect, but it's someone that I can follow. More and more we're seeing that brand affinity is not towards faceless corporations, but to individuals with faces.

And you have to be willing to put yourself out there and be vulnerable, share more about yourself. And at least at Deseret Book, you have to have a purpose, greater than, you know, just wanting to be a famous author.

Angela Johnson: Definitely one of the things that I loved about Cedar Fort when I started working there was, I talked to our CEO, and he said that the books that we publish, especially like the LDS nonfiction books, they're books that are going to affect eternity.

And I thought about that a lot. And it's the same with Deseret Book: those are books that give you knowledge that you can take into eternity with you, and I just thought, "That's such a

beautiful concept,” and authors who want to write those books and want to share that knowledge that they have with others, they need to build that brand and find their place.

Dave Kimball: Yeah, but even if you’re not writing religious books, like Chris said, he doesn’t publish, you know, religious things, but he’s looking for authors who still want to do good in the world, who still want to be promoting goodness. And even if they don’t write anything that has anything to do with religion, he’s looking for people who stand for something and who are willing to—and at this conference, the LDSPMA, I mean that’s what, that’s the tie that binds, right? At least it should be, I think, with this organization.

Chris Schoebinger: Thanks, Dave. I guess I would add, I don’t know. I guess I feel like—I don’t typically share this in, well, the majority of conferences that I talk with, because this is such a unique setting and a unique audience, and we all have something in common, and that is we believe that the Spirit can literally help us write the stories we’re meant to write. And if we’re not tapping in to that source, then we’re living below our author potential. And that can be a religious book, and it can be a book about dragons. I mean, it doesn’t matter to me. You know, light and truth can still be taught in a way that will connect with people, no matter their denomination, no matter their background, because truth is universal. And so I just think, if we can learn to be Spirit-driven authors, and really rely, I really believe, I think we can have heaven’s help in writing and fulfilling our, even our calling to be authors. I think some of us truly feel like we have a talent. Right? And you do! You’ve been given talents and skills, and you’re trying to hone and craft them. I mean, that’s why you’re attending this conference.

Don’t let doubt creep in. This is a time for you to embrace your talent and your skills, and then just magnify those by allowing the Spirit into your life. And again, I think I’m preaching to the choir here, but I just feel like we’re in a unique situation as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to, yeah, just make a difference in the world with the craft that we’ve been given.

Angela Johnson: Great, that’s fabulous. So let’s move into the process that manuscripts go through, from an acceptance to rejection, and how you as publishers look at the manuscript and decide whether or not it’s going to fit your publishing needs.

Marci, would you like to start?

Marci Monson: Sure. So, most of our manuscripts are submitted to the editors, so I don’t get to see them from the very outset. But something that I really love being here is that anytime an

editor thinks, “Okay, this is pretty good,” she’ll bring it to a team. So we have a team for nonfiction, we have a team for cookbooks, and we have a team for children.

And she’ll bring it to the whole team and say—I say “she” because our editors are all women—but they’ll bring it to the whole team. And then the whole team has input. They’ll ask how their marketing plan is. And so it’s very collaborative on how we choose to go forward with something. And then after a conference with that team, they’ll take it to the whole trade team.

So there’s different levels. And it’s very collaborative, and I really enjoy as—I realized that I never said my title—but I’m the marketing and publicity manager.

And I like being able, from the very start, to be able to be part of that process and help too. And not everyone loves every single thing we’re going to publish, but we all have a say in it, and we all have a part in picking what we okay and go forward with.

Angela Johnson: Dave, would you like to talk about your process?

Dave Kimball: Sure! We have a submission protocol, where people can submit things cold. And that’s reviewed by a submissions manager.

Things come to us in various ways. And once things get to a point where I see them on one of the various committees, the things that we’re looking for, the things that we talk about, is not only quality of content, but clearness of message and clearness of audience, like we’ve already talked about. And we have identified some really clear audiences that we try to go after, and there are some defining traits about each of those. We try to say, “In this case, is it going to help that audience? And is there a clear job to be done? Clayton Christensen developed the “job to be done” framework in his *Innovator’s Dilemma* and *Innovator’s Solution*, books that I encourage you to look at. But we literally try to list the job to be done. And then we try to see—we talk about whether or not that job has enough frequency or magnitude to be able to bring in the attention that we need to make it a successful project. And so those are some of the key elements: not only is it well written, but is the audience well defined? And does it do a job for people? Does it help them with whatever that is? And that may be something functional or social or emotional.

In a fiction title, or nonfiction title, or in a children’s book, or in whatever, music that we’re talking about, or film we’re talking about, or even a lifestyle project that we’re talking about, We follow kind of that same framework for each of those. Once it kind of passes that first committee, then I actually pitch it to a larger group and get their feedback. So it’s a pretty rigorous process on our

end before things get published, but we know that once we beat things up, they're better for it at the end, and it serves our customers better by the time it's all done.

Angela Johnson: Yeah. Ashley?

Ashley Gebert: So I handle all of our submissions; all of our manuscripts come to me first. And I make that first decision.

And a lot of things go into what I decide. So for nonfiction, I'm going to look at, "Does this manuscript have a really high, strong concept? Does it have a good focus? What is the author's background? For fiction, I'm going to look for voice, is the biggest thing. If the writer has a strong voice, then I'm not very concerned about the rest of the story. I'm going to send it on to the next step.

But I will look at characters and skill levels. And sometimes I'll even look up that author on social media to see how their platforms are.

And then children's books: I can read through that right away. But usually I only read just a couple of pages, if that, and then if I think that it's strong enough, I send it on to our evaluators, and they read the whole thing, send me feedback. If they like it, it goes on to our writing quality committee, which includes all of our editors and our publicist. And we talk about the writing specifically: whether it's strong enough, if we like the story, the characters.

If it's nonfiction, we talk about how it impacted us, how we would feel if we were the readers, how it would help our lives.

And then if we give it the okay, and we give our feedback and our rating on that manuscript, we send it on to the new products committee. And that's made up of a lot of different managers in the company.

And they make the final decision on whether we're going to accept that book or not. And at that point, they decide what the budget is going to be, if it's going to be soft cover, a hard cover, all those details.

Angela Johnson: Great, thank you. And Chris?

Chris Schoebinger: Yeah, the rejection process is really easy. Send us something that we don't like, and we send you a rejection letter! But in all seriousness, here's the number one

reason I believe that things get rejected, and it's really basic: It's authors submitting manuscripts that have not been scrubbed or reviewed enough times by other readers. I mean, it's just, I've seen it over and over again. I mean, sometimes I like something, but it's like, "Oh, man." And I ask the author, "Who else has read this?" "Well, my mom read it." Yeah, that doesn't count.

And so really, really spend the time to revise and revise and scrub the manuscript before submissions. The acceptance process is a lot more involved, obviously, and for Shadow Mountain, again, there's really only three of us initially who are reviewing manuscripts at the beginning, and honestly it's Lisa Mangum and Heidi Taylor Gordon that are the front line.

If they like something, the three of us come together and talk about the manuscript and is there enough differentiation, and is the writing good? And if we can check off all the boxes—and typically it has to be unanimous—Then we plan our pitch to our sales, our marketing, our retail teams, and that's where, I mean, we're defending the manuscript. We're going in saying, "This is why this has the potential to really have a market and sell well." And that's not always easy. Our sales team is just really discriminating when it comes to what they want and what they think will sell, and sometimes we're not on the same page. And it's almost a grueling process.

But when it passes that process, well, at that point, collectively we feel like this has real potential. And so we have the whole team behind it. And so that's sort of the nuts and bolts of how we come to know what we're going to publish.

Marci Monson: Great. Can I talk about something? Yeah. We might be a little unique in this, because we don't do fiction. Well, I guess you consider children's books fiction, but we do a lot of reaching out to authors and saying, "We really love your design blog. Have you ever thought about writing a book? We really love your Instagram account. Have you thought about writing a book? And so we do more outreach that way, than maybe other publishers do, where we are trying to acquire by asking them if they're interested.

And I don't think you can do that quite as easily with fiction.

Angela Johnson: Definitely not with fiction. But nonfiction, that's a fun process.

And so at Cedar Fort we do the grueling process as well. And really if it comes down to it, because I'm the one who sees the manuscripts first, if I can't get past the first page, then it does receive a rejection letter. And so I want to see something that captures my attention, that makes me want to continue to read, and definitely something that's been edited and—at least, edited as far as, you know, grammar—and something that's been read quite a few times.

You would be surprised at the amount of submissions, I'm sure we've all seen, that people just quickly wrote it and sent it in. So that's definitely not what a publisher wants to see. We want to see your best work and the manuscript when it's hit the peak of what it should be.

Chris Schoebinger: Angela, you said something really important that I loved. And that is that first page.

And a lot of times I think we forget that first page, really, for a publisher, beyond the literal first page, is that pitch letter: is that query letter.

I mean, how many of us have read that and just not even got to the first page? Because it just, it was missing. It didn't tell me enough of a hook, enough of a, you know, didn't differentiate it enough. One of the things that I think is so helpful for authors is to help me understand the comp titles.

You know, "This book is going to sit on the shelf with what other books?" If you can help me envision that, All of a sudden, I'm like, "Oh, okay, you've done your homework, and this has an audience." And so save me that work. Help me know—and if you're writing children's fiction, be realistic. Don't say it's just like Harry Potter. Right? You know, try to find someone—like, if you're a debut author, well, here are some other debut authors in this genre that have sold well. I mean, just try to fit yourself into that category that, again, is going to be believable for me. And we'll know, "Well, this person is branded." So again, I think that's very helpful for a publisher.

Marci Monson: I don't know if anyone else gets this, that we have occasionally where they'll say, like, "There are no comp titles. This is a totally new, unique idea that no one's ever had." Which is very rarely true. There's always some kind of comp you can come up with. Even if it's not the exact same thing, you can find something. And we take it less seriously when you say there are none.

Dave Kimball: Sometimes there's a reason that there are none.

Ashley Gebert: And I might also add that it's really, really important to research the publisher you're submitting to.

Because so many of my manuscripts that come into me, I know right from the title that it's not for us.

I got one that had profanity in it. And if you're submitting that, you are totally looking in the wrong places. So I think, yeah, doing your research ahead of time can save everyone a lot of time.

Angela Johnson: I'm so glad you brought that up, Ashley, because that leads into our next question, as to, we all have a submissions process, a submissions portal, most likely.

What sort of—like, does your submissions portal explain what you're looking for? And what do you see authors doing that hinders their manuscript from being accepted? For example, at Cedar Fort, we ask questions like, what is your URL for your Facebook page or for your website? And a lot of times people will just put N/A.

And then we have a question like, "What further information do you want us to know about your social media?" And then they'll say, Oh, I have social media." But you've just put N/A for all the URLs. So we want that information so that we can go out and we can look at the marketability of your book. It's not so that we can stalk you.

So in the submissions process, what do you see authors making mistakes in the forms that they're filling out that caused their manuscripts to be rejected? **Dave Kimball:** Oh what—we can do Ashley first. That's okay. I don't want to monopolize.

Ashley Gebert: Okay, I'll start. I would say that if a company has a list of guidelines, like we have our submission guidelines on our website that have pretty detailed instructions, but just make sure you follow those instructions. Like, we learned how to follow directions back in kindergarten, but it's crazy how many people can't do it now.

I have gotten some manuscripts that, right in the query letter, they tell me why they decided to go against all of our submission guidelines. And right away I know that that's not going to be something that I'm going to accept, because they knowingly broke all of our rules.

So I think that that's really important. And then, you know, I've already talked about social media. We do have that on our author questionnaires. We ask about their social media presence. And we also ask about writing groups.

If an author says that they're part of a writing critique group, then that's a huge bonus in their favor, because I know that they're actively working on improving their writing.

And we also ask about different connections they have: if they know published authors and that kind of thing, or if they know other editors, other publishers, that kind of stuff.

Angela Johnson: Great. Dave?

Dave Kimball: I'll wait to be called on.

I think, one thing that just is probably unique to our community here is we get submissions that say, "Elder so-and-so said I need to write this book, and so you guys need to publish this." Or, you know, "I showed it to Sheri Dew, and Sheri said, you know, you should do this." Well, if Sheri doesn't tell me, then Sheri didn't tell anybody. Right? Like and that's not true. I don't have a direct line to Sheri. What I mean is, your pitch has to be stronger than, "My bishop said I should do this." To add to what Chris was saying earlier, that initial pitch letter has to lay out the reason for why your specific audience wants this specific thing, and why you're qualified and this work is qualified to do that thing.

So I would just echo all the things that have already been said, and do your work to let it get beat up before it comes to the publisher.

Angela Johnson: Definitely. Marci?

Marci Monson: I don't have a ton to add, other than we are not a religious publisher, so don't submit a religious work, because we will tell you to go to Deseret Book.

But yeah, but we also don't do fiction. So just going on what everyone said, you know, read the instructions. Definitely

Chris Schoebinger: Yeah, and I think Ashley nailed it when she said, "Just know your publisher." You know? And it's not that hard. You can see what they publish. You can see by what they publish, what they're looking for.

And just be—I mean, I hope our authors are detail-oriented, right? They should be.

And submission guidelines are typically usually pretty clear on exactly how a publisher wants you to submit a manuscript. So just—it's like reading the clues on Amazing Race, right? Making sure you don't miss it.

And if you follow the clues or follow the instructions, man, I think you're be a step ahead of everyone else. So I don't have anything else to add, I think, to what everyone else said.

Angela Johnson: Yeah.

Ashley Gebert: Can I add one more thing to that? Just that we have a requirement that our authors submit all of their—if it's a nonfiction book—that they submit all of their sources, and an image of all their sources, so that we can check them later. And authors are just appalled that they have to do that, because it is a lot of work, but it's just so important to keep track of those sources to know where you're getting your information.

And if you have a really strong understanding of how to cite your sources and footnotes, and we're in your work cited page or whatever, that really saves us a lot of work and a lot of money, and it'll give you a big boost in the acceptance process.

Angela Johnson: Great. So, do any of you work with agents to accept manuscripts?

Chris Schoebinger: Yeah, I would say at least 50% of our authors have agents. And you're not required to have an agent just to submit a manuscript, but yeah, and a good agent makes everyone more money.

But not all agents are the same, so if you're looking for an agent, great. If you have an agent, I hope it's a good one. And if you don't have an agent, again, that's fine, but you should—again, this is probably a whole different breakout session—but make sure you understand the basic workings of a publishing contract, so that you can represent yourself well.

Marci Monson: I'll just say, from our perspective, we actually prefer non-agents, and it's just we're a small- to mid-sized publisher, and agents cost a little bit more money for us. So we always get a little shy when somebody's agented. But it doesn't mean we won't do it. But it is usually, you know, a slight check mark in the "no" box.

Ashley Gebert: So we have very few authors who have agents. I do get some submissions from agents on behalf of their authors. And I wouldn't say that I've ever had a wowing experience, like, because someone had an agent, that didn't convince me that I should take a closer look at their manuscript. A lot of times it's still not something that we want. But for Covenant, it's really not necessary, as long as you have a—like we were saying—a good

understanding of what's expected in the publishing industry, and what's going on in your contracts, then that should be good enough when you're publishing with us.

Dave Kimball: Same. Amen to that.

Angela Johnson: Okay. One thing that Chris said that I really think cannot be emphasized enough, is know how to read your contract. And actually read it, because a lot of authors, especially in the LDS community, we just trust each other that everything is going to go perfectly, and it's going to be exactly what you want. But make sure you read your contract, because these are businesses that you're working with, and businesses need to make money. And so knowing the requirements of your contract is so important. I can't say that enough.

All right, well, so we're at the end of the talking part of this session, but we are going to leave some time for questions and answers, and thank you everybody for joining us today, and hope you enjoy!