1

00:00:00,720 --> 00:00:03,901

We're going to get going. So, good morning, everyone, and welcome to today's event,

2

00:00:04,170 --> 00:00:08,610

"The big conversation: the future of publishing," which is part of our AGM week of

3

00:00:08,670 --> 00:00:12,630

activities. I'm Anna Ganley, and I'm Chief Executive of the Society of Authors.

4

00:00:13,020 --> 00:00:16,800

I'm also Chair of the Creators' Rights Alliance, and I sit on the advisory board

5

00:00:16,831 --> 00:00:21,120

for the International Authors Forum, the London Book Fair, and also for Five Leaf,

6

00:00:21,180 --> 00:00:24,870

which is an interdisciplinary research institute dedicated to law and aesthetics,

7

00:00:25,290 --> 00:00:28,320

based out of the Centre for Commercial Law at Queen Mary University, London.

8

00:00:29,131 --> 00:00:32,580

In our events, we use audio descriptions to help make our sessions more accessible

9

00:00:32,640 --> 00:00:36,420

to those who are blind or partially sighted, and so my audio description is that

10

00:00:36,510 --> 00:00:38,460

I'm a white woman. I'm wearing black glasses.

11

00:00:38,550 --> 00:00:41,850

I have long brown hair and a black shirt.

12

00:00:42,000 --> 00:00:46,560

I'll ask my panelists to do an audio description of themselves before they speak

13

00:00:46,680 --> 00:00:50,970

too. The moderator for today is Elsa Robert, thank you very much, who will be

14

00:00:51,030 --> 00:00:53,670

posting links in the chat throughout this session.

15

00:00:54,630 --> 00:00:59,220

A reminder that this online event is free to all, but if you can afford to, please

16

00:00:59,280 --> 00:01:02,940

do consider donating to our Access Fund, which is currently closed while we

17
00:01:03,000 --> 00:01:08,250
fundraise ahead of 2027. It provides grants to authors so that travel,

18
00:01:08,370 --> 00:01:12,330
subsistence, childcare costs, and access needs aren't barriers to authors taking

19
00:01:12,360 --> 00:01:14,790
part in events, residencies, and retreats.

20
00:01:15,240 --> 00:01:18,540
So a donation of around 5 pound or more would be wonderful if you can.

21
00:01:18,690 --> 00:01:23,190
Thank you very much. You can also help our Access Fund by making a purchase on our

22
00:01:23,220 --> 00:01:27,000
online bookstore at bookshop.org, where you can find books by writers taking part

23
00:01:27,480 --> 00:01:32,220
in our events program. And so if you're thinking about buying or what to buy for

24
00:01:32,280 --> 00:01:35,580
friends and family this Christmas, it's worth taking a look on our online

25
00:01:35,610 --> 00:01:39,660
bookstore. You can purchase books from this year's events via the link that is now

26
00:01:39,720 --> 00:01:42,660
in the chat. Some housekeeping before we get started.

27
00:01:42,720 --> 00:01:46,950
The session will last for 60 minutes and include a 15-minute Q&A session.

28
00:01:47,551 --> 00:01:51,870
If captions would be useful to you, you can turn on the captions function or live

29
00:01:51,961 --> 00:01:56,580
subtitles. And finally, for this event, the recording will be available on our

30
00:01:56,641 --> 00:01:58,650
website in the resources section.

31
00:01:59,190 --> 00:02:03,060
The recording will also be emailed to all registered attendees if you can't stay

32
00:02:03,090 --> 00:02:07,470
for the full session. So, please do post your questions in the Q&A box.

33

00:02:08,310 --> 00:02:12,720

It is possible to post anonymously if you prefer, and any general comments should

34

00:02:12,750 --> 00:02:14,880

go into the chat box, and that'd be wonderful.

35

00:02:15,601 --> 00:02:18,960

So, I'd now like to introduce you to today's esteemed panel.

36

00:02:19,050 --> 00:02:21,930

We have Hellie Ogden, Meryl Halls, and Dan Conway.

37

00:02:22,530 --> 00:02:28,200

Hellie is co-head of the UK book division and partner at the WME Agency, and she's

38

00:02:28,260 --> 00:02:30,870

current president of the Association of Authors' Agents.

39

00:02:31,320 --> 00:02:35,760

She represents fiction, children's books, and non-fiction, and she enjoys bold

40

00:02:35,851 --> 00:02:39,810

storytelling, moving prose, and vivid, thought-provoking characters.

41
00:02:40,141 --> 00:02:44,430
And most importantly for our audience today, you're actively taking on new clients,

42
00:02:44,790 --> 00:02:48,840
and it's great to hear that you're an editorially focused agent and you're keen to

43
00:02:48,870 --> 00:02:52,440
help develop and nurture new writers, which is what writers always love to hear.

44
00:02:53,220 --> 00:02:57,540
You mentor debut writers, and you represent a wide range of global bestsellers and

45
00:02:57,601 --> 00:03:02,910
award-winning writers, and so it's easy to see why you were shortlisted for Agent

46
00:03:02,940 --> 00:03:08,310
of the Year at the British Book Awards in 2025. Hi, Hellie. Just say hello there.

47
00:03:09,480 --> 00:03:12,781
Moving on to Meryl Halls. Meryl is managing director of the Booksellers

48
00:03:12,840 --> 00:03:15,840
Association, a role that she's been doing since 2018.

49

00:03:16,080 --> 00:03:19,380

Meryl was named as Future Book Person of the Year in 2020.

50

00:03:19,770 --> 00:03:23,970

She chairs the Book Trade Charity, serves on the board of Bookshop.org, the British

51

00:03:24,031 --> 00:03:28,590

Retail Consortium Policy Board, and is on the executive committee of the European

52

00:03:28,650 --> 00:03:30,781

and International Booksellers Federation.

53

00:03:31,470 --> 00:03:35,281

Also a former vice chair of the Independent Retailers Confederation and former

54

00:03:35,340 --> 00:03:39,690

trustee of World Book Day. So a powerhouse and a leading advocate for book selling.

55

00:03:39,930 --> 00:03:40,921

So welcome, Meryl.

56

00:03:42,570 --> 00:03:47,880

And finally, Dan Conway. Dan is CEO of the Publishers Association since 2022,

57
00:03:48,000 --> 00:03:52,050
having previously been the membership organization's director of external affairs.

58
00:03:52,710 --> 00:03:57,210
Alongside his role at the PA, Dan is a board trustee for World Book Day, a

59
00:03:57,270 --> 00:04:01,560
non-executive director at the Publishers Licensing Services, and a board member of

60
00:04:01,590 --> 00:04:04,171
the Creative Industries Council. Hello to you, Dan.

61
00:04:05,880 --> 00:04:10,380
And a reminder before each of our panelists speak, please do remember your audio

62
00:04:10,440 --> 00:04:14,640
description to help make this conversation as inclusive as we can to everybody.

63
00:04:15,690 --> 00:04:20,580
So we'll open the conversation with a few words from each of you on what you see as

64
00:04:20,640 --> 00:04:25,920
the key challenges and opportunities facing your area of the industry coming up in

65
00:04:26,070 --> 00:04:30,990
2027, and then perhaps we can delve into some of these areas a bit more deeply in

66
00:04:31,050 --> 00:04:36,660
our conversation. So Hellie, if I could come to you first, and then we'll move

67
00:04:36,690 --> 00:04:37,680
around the panel.

68
00:04:38,670 --> 00:04:40,800
Hello. It's lovely to be here. Thank you for having me.

69
00:04:41,460 --> 00:04:46,410
I am a white woman with blonde hair, a green jumper, and very tired eyes.

70
00:04:49,020 --> 00:04:50,970
So yeah, opportunities, challenges.

71
00:04:51,630 --> 00:04:55,531
I mean, I'd be remiss not to mention AI, but we're doing that later, so I'm going

72
00:04:55,531 --> 00:04:56,790
to mention some other things

73
00:04:58,020 --> 00:05:02,190
for now. I think what's really been interesting this year in particular, perhaps,

74
00:05:02,370 --> 00:05:07,350
is the rise in the self-published tradition of publishing and how quickly that's

75
00:05:07,350 --> 00:05:12,091
taken off and how some of the biggest-selling books we're seeing have gone from the

76
00:05:12,120 --> 00:05:16,410
self-published space into the traditional space, or just stayed as self-published

77
00:05:17,100 --> 00:05:22,980
books. I saw the head of Amazon Books the other day, and he said to

78
00:05:23,040 --> 00:05:27,270
me that it's those lot who are making the majority of the money across publishing.

79
00:05:27,330 --> 00:05:31,140
It's not PRH, it's not HarperCollins, it's not any of the big five.

80
00:05:31,230 --> 00:05:35,460
It's this bunch of self-published people who've actually stayed in the

81
00:05:35,490 --> 00:05:38,670
self-publishing lane and are incredible

82
00:05:39,870 --> 00:05:44,850
businesspeople who know how to play the game and are so smart about how they use

83
00:05:44,880 --> 00:05:45,930
those algorithms and

84
00:05:47,341 --> 00:05:52,080
use Amazon to sell a lot of copies in a way that some publishers are completely

85
00:05:52,140 --> 00:05:55,410
behind in terms of how they're doing it. So I thought that was fascinating.

86
00:05:55,500 --> 00:05:59,610
So I guess that's really interesting to me that there are these other opportunities

87
00:05:59,670 --> 00:06:00,480
for writers to

88
00:06:01,860 --> 00:06:06,660
make proper money, to make sure their books are visible and clear and doing it

89
00:06:06,690 --> 00:06:11,580
themselves. Obviously, as an agent, we want to be involved with that as much as we

90
00:06:11,640 --> 00:06:13,110
can, but we are always looking to it

91
00:06:14,790 --> 00:06:18,120
to see if we can then move those people into the traditional space.

92
00:06:18,180 --> 00:06:21,660
So I think that's quite exciting, and that's a bit of publishing that's grown and

93
00:06:21,720 --> 00:06:23,550
grown, but particularly we see it feels massive.

94
00:06:24,210 --> 00:06:29,160
I think challenges, on the sort of flip of that and related to that, people are

95
00:06:29,160 --> 00:06:33,630
often doing that because traditional routes to publishing, after submitting to

96
00:06:33,690 --> 00:06:38,070
publishers, debut novels and non-fiction, it feels tough. It feels tough.

97

00:06:38,130 --> 00:06:41,850

The market is probably harder than I've seen it in many, many years.

98

00:06:41,910 --> 00:06:45,720

It feels like editors are not feeling particularly confident at the moment.

99

00:06:45,780 --> 00:06:50,280

It feels like people are wary. I actually don't think that's the case across the

100

00:06:50,341 --> 00:06:53,460

world. I think American publishing feels really buoyant and exciting.

101

00:06:54,210 --> 00:06:56,401

I think a lot of the foreign markets are feeling pretty good.

102

00:06:56,760 --> 00:07:00,930

But the UK market isn't. It's feeling pretty down, and that's not just non-fiction

103

00:07:00,990 --> 00:07:04,320

struggling, it's fiction too. And I do think that comes down to a lack of

104

00:07:04,350 --> 00:07:09,270

confidence. So, I think there's that, and also just retail space shrinking.

105

00:07:09,390 --> 00:07:12,630

So, supermarkets aren't really taking books in the same way anymore.

106

00:07:12,630 --> 00:07:16,081

If you go into a supermarket now, the space is getting smaller and smaller.

107

00:07:16,740 --> 00:07:20,730

So it's just giving us less opportunity and less place to sell.

108

00:07:20,790 --> 00:07:24,960

So that's hard, and we're always thinking how we can sort of come around that and

109

00:07:24,990 --> 00:07:28,350

what are the sorts of books we think can get around that issue.

110

00:07:29,550 --> 00:07:31,260

So I think those are the big things for me.

111

00:07:34,020 --> 00:07:37,290

Thanks, Hellie, and we'll get into that a little bit later in the conversation.

112

00:07:38,790 --> 00:07:43,081

Dan, shall I come to you for your key challenges and opportunities?

113

00:07:43,470 --> 00:07:46,201

Thank you, Anna. So,

114

00:07:47,970 --> 00:07:53,820

I'm a white man with graying hair and a pretty badly ironed

115

00:07:53,910 --> 00:07:55,860

white shirt on. Nice to see you all.

116

00:07:55,890 --> 00:07:58,410

It's a real pleasure to be able to speak to you.

117

00:07:58,680 --> 00:08:01,081

I think Hellie's talked about the market dynamics

118

00:08:02,520 --> 00:08:07,050

quite a lot there, so perhaps I'll talk about the sort of the non-economic

119

00:08:07,860 --> 00:08:09,390

opportunities and challenges for us.

120

00:08:09,480 --> 00:08:14,730

I mean, we're going to come onto it, but obviously, the David Walliams

121
00:08:16,620 --> 00:08:22,201
news over the past few weeks has reached fever pitch, and I think we are going to

122
00:08:22,230 --> 00:08:27,061
be moving quite carefully into a conversation about safeguarding of staff and also

123
00:08:27,091 --> 00:08:29,460
what we do with the new creative industries

124
00:08:30,660 --> 00:08:33,720
regulator. So I know we'll talk about that a little bit on the agenda, but I think

125
00:08:33,750 --> 00:08:38,490
there's something about workforce that I think we really need to, as an industry,

126
00:08:38,581 --> 00:08:40,980
come together and address sensibly.

127
00:08:42,720 --> 00:08:45,931
Secondly, I know we're going to talk about AI probably as well, but we have just

128
00:08:45,990 --> 00:08:48,990
seen the biggest copyright theft the world has ever seen.

129
00:08:49,500 --> 00:08:53,220
So at the Publishers Association, that keeps us up at night.

130
00:08:53,280 --> 00:08:58,380
And I think we're in a global battle for content regulation, the value of authors'

131
00:08:59,010 --> 00:08:59,340
rights.

132
00:09:02,490 --> 00:09:07,020
It's a sort of UK issue and it's a global issue, and I think we've got to get that

133
00:09:07,080 --> 00:09:10,452
right. We've got to get the funding. ... copyright rights.

134
00:09:10,872 --> 00:09:13,332
And then also, we're going to talk about this as well, but we've had this amazing

135
00:09:13,392 --> 00:09:16,633
kind of shared campaign about reading and the National Year of Reading and what

136
00:09:16,662 --> 00:09:21,192
comes next. Can we actually make that count in terms of reversing the decline in

137
00:09:21,222 --> 00:09:23,412
children's reading, and how do we all work together to do that?

138
00:09:26,142 --> 00:09:27,972
Thanks, Dan. And finally, Meryl.

139
00:09:29,262 --> 00:09:30,552
Right. Thanks very much, Anna.

140
00:09:31,872 --> 00:09:35,652
I suspected that maybe the authors on the call might know a little bit less about

141
00:09:35,682 --> 00:09:39,222
the Booksellers Association than the other associations, so I thought I'd just give

142
00:09:39,252 --> 00:09:43,752
you some hard facts to start. We've been around for about 130 years, shortly.

143
00:09:43,932 --> 00:09:47,232
I think we're a little bit older than the PA, and we're the only trade association

144
00:09:47,262 --> 00:09:49,452
for bookshops in the UK and Ireland.

145
00:09:49,512 --> 00:09:50,442
We represent

146
00:09:51,732 --> 00:09:53,652
all significant booksellers except Amazon.

147
00:09:54,162 --> 00:09:59,562
So we have Waterstones, Blackwells, Donostros, TG Jones, in its current iteration,

148
00:09:59,652 --> 00:10:03,822
and two of the supermarkets in membership, as well as about 1,100 independent

149
00:10:03,883 --> 00:10:07,812
bookshops, which tends to be what the media looks at when they count the numbers.

150
00:10:07,842 --> 00:10:11,022
They tend to come to us for that. But we represent, we're a pretty broad church.

151
00:10:11,412 --> 00:10:14,262
10% of our members are in Ireland, in the Republic of Ireland.

152
00:10:15,582 --> 00:10:19,512
Our role is to hold aloft bookselling community through advocacy, support, and

153
00:10:19,572 --> 00:10:24,162
celebration, which is what trade associations do, and we're very proud to be able

154
00:10:24,252 --> 00:10:28,152
to do that. I think you all know, booksellers are a brilliant conduit between

155
00:10:28,242 --> 00:10:31,902
authors, books, and readers. They know what works, they know what they're looking

156
00:10:31,932 --> 00:10:33,852
for for their own shops and their own communities.

157
00:10:33,883 --> 00:10:38,562
They triage and curate all the time to match books with readers every day.

158
00:10:39,102 --> 00:10:42,222
Now, the number of bookshops is at a 12-year high, which I think I would not have

159
00:10:42,252 --> 00:10:45,792
predicted in March 2020 as the pandemic started.

160
00:10:46,272 --> 00:10:50,202
And we've got about between 2,500 and 3,000 specialist bookshops on our high

161
00:10:50,262 --> 00:10:55,002
streets. And you'll also know there's been an uptick in genre retailing, so that's

162
00:10:55,032 --> 00:10:58,452
been led by romance. We've got quite a lot of romance bookshops now.

163
00:10:59,142 --> 00:11:03,102
And the number of people wanting to open bookshops and coming to us for that help

164
00:11:03,522 --> 00:11:06,883
is increasing every year, so there's great joy to be had there.

165
00:11:07,152 --> 00:11:09,582
Now, booksellers tell us regularly what their concerns are.

166
00:11:09,613 --> 00:11:13,363
We ask them, and they tell us whether we ask them or not, which is good.

167
00:11:14,532 --> 00:11:17,682
Booksellers, like authors, publishers, and agents, they contain multitudes.

168
00:11:17,863 --> 00:11:20,172
They're obviously people people because they're retailers,

169
00:11:21,372 --> 00:11:26,022
and they are drawn to books and reading through passion and intellectual curiosity,

170
00:11:26,172 --> 00:11:28,482
and by a deep drive to see a nation of readers.

171
00:11:29,052 --> 00:11:32,352
But they're also really practical people, because if you run a shop, you have to be

172
00:11:32,383 --> 00:11:36,883
really practical. So if you ask a group of booksellers about the supply chain, they

173
00:11:36,912 --> 00:11:41,442
will talk to you at some length about cardboard boxes and invoices, because if that

174
00:11:41,472 --> 00:11:43,692
stuff doesn't work, then they can't do their jobs.

175
00:11:44,412 --> 00:11:46,363
But obviously, they're not only concerned about supply chain.

176
00:11:46,422 --> 00:11:50,892
Their prime concerns are about sustainability and viability of the ecosystem,

177
00:11:51,582 --> 00:11:54,372
engagement with and promotion of the books that you're all writing and

178
00:11:54,432 --> 00:11:57,072
illustrating, and obviously the cost of doing business.

179
00:11:57,822 --> 00:12:01,782
Independents are obviously small businesses, and they've taken risks to open their

180
00:12:01,812 --> 00:12:05,262
shops, and they've got increased rents, increased rates.

181
00:12:05,652 --> 00:12:07,152
They've got increased staff costs.

182
00:12:07,602 --> 00:12:10,542
They're increasingly concerned about AI, I know we're going to get back to that

183
00:12:10,602 --> 00:12:15,072
later, and its impact on their work as retailers, which is starting to emerge now

184
00:12:15,102 --> 00:12:19,482
as an issue, and obviously the corrosive potential it's got to tear up our world.

185

00:12:20,322 --> 00:12:23,142

And I'm full square behind Dan's work on all of that.

186

00:12:23,622 --> 00:12:26,592

They also put a huge amount of energy into building communities in their town

187

00:12:26,682 --> 00:12:30,102

centers and reaching new audiences to get new customers through the door.

188

00:12:31,633 --> 00:12:36,372

And they do a fantastic amount of work getting authors into schools, building up

189

00:12:36,402 --> 00:12:40,992

book clubs. Sorry, the lights are going off in my meeting room here, so I'm just

190

00:12:41,052 --> 00:12:45,222

trying to ignore that. They work with local libraries, food banks, charities, and

191

00:12:45,312 --> 00:12:48,642

they do all that because they love book selling and they love selling the books

192

00:12:48,672 --> 00:12:52,873

that you write. So just to zoom right out and answer the brief, I think hopes and

193
00:12:52,902 --> 00:12:57,072
concerns are a constant supply of authors' work being beautifully published and

194
00:12:57,132 --> 00:13:00,972
made available with the freedom to stock and sell as they wish, the protection of

195
00:13:01,002 --> 00:13:05,172
copyright and the proper regulation of AI by the government, government support and

196
00:13:05,233 --> 00:13:09,342
acknowledgment for the cultural contribution of bookshops, a properly functioning

197
00:13:09,432 --> 00:13:12,972
supply chain, a supportive publishing community, a flourishing high street

198
00:13:13,032 --> 00:13:17,142
infrastructure, and the importance of bookshop events valued by authors and

199
00:13:17,202 --> 00:13:21,072
publishers. So if we could get all that done this morning, that would be marvelous.

200
00:13:21,583 --> 00:13:22,572
Very happy to be here.

201

00:13:23,712 --> 00:13:26,292

Thank you, Meryl. I'm sure we can. Yeah, power of minds.

202

00:13:27,192 --> 00:13:28,873

Well, that seems like a good place to start.

203

00:13:28,902 --> 00:13:32,952

And in terms of the macro level, the culture of reading and how we're all, as

204

00:13:33,012 --> 00:13:37,452

organizations, promoting a culture of reading, and this year has been the National

205

00:13:37,512 --> 00:13:43,392

Year of Reading. And we've seen a very public campaign, Go All In, which is a

206

00:13:43,452 --> 00:13:45,583

national movement to get everybody reading.

207

00:13:46,272 --> 00:13:50,863

And in very difficult times, we need all the help pushing in that direction in

208

00:13:50,892 --> 00:13:55,333

terms of the value and importance of reading for pleasure, reading for purpose, how

209
00:13:55,363 --> 00:13:59,472
it helps us as humans with our critical thinking and all the rest of it.

210
00:14:00,162 --> 00:14:04,303
And the results are coming in now in terms of all the effort that have gone in by

211
00:14:04,363 --> 00:14:09,522
multiple partners this year in terms of turning around the decline in reading

212
00:14:09,583 --> 00:14:13,032
habits, and it's the first time in 10 years that reading for pleasure rates in

213
00:14:13,092 --> 00:14:18,102
children have increased, and with 7 million adults saying that Go All In campaign

214
00:14:18,132 --> 00:14:19,842
has impacted on their reading behaviors.

215
00:14:20,322 --> 00:14:25,962
So it's been a really collaborative campaign from all sectors within

216
00:14:26,053 --> 00:14:31,782
the book-selling industry and book publishing

217
00:14:32,382 --> 00:14:34,962
charities to encourage a culture of reading.

218
00:14:35,772 --> 00:14:36,432
And so,

219
00:14:37,992 --> 00:14:41,233
as we're heading to the end of that year, we heard over the summer, didn't we, that

220
00:14:41,262 --> 00:14:44,442
there was an Education Select Committee inquiry that was calling for a national

221
00:14:44,562 --> 00:14:49,392
decade of reading. And so, as this has been a Department of Education initiative

222
00:14:49,572 --> 00:14:55,422
supported by many, I think about 60 organizations, for you, what has been your

223
00:14:55,452 --> 00:15:00,762
involvement? What have been your highlights, and how does your organization work to

224
00:15:00,822 --> 00:15:05,502
help develop that lifelong reading habit in society?

225

00:15:06,042 --> 00:15:07,842

Whoever wants to jump in there first.

226

00:15:08,532 --> 00:15:11,833

And what would you like to see as the legacy of the National Year of Reading,

227

00:15:12,342 --> 00:15:12,882

personally?

228

00:15:15,822 --> 00:15:17,863

I'll jump in, shall I, Meryl, unless you want to go?

229

00:15:19,333 --> 00:15:19,602

You go.

230

00:15:23,382 --> 00:15:26,532

Me go? Okay. It has been an incredibly exciting year, Anna.

231

00:15:27,312 --> 00:15:27,733

I think

232

00:15:31,512 --> 00:15:34,392

the truth is, we've been building the airplane as it's been going down the runway

233
00:15:34,721 --> 00:15:35,292
this year.

234
00:15:37,452 --> 00:15:39,581
There was this kind of huge jeopardy.

235
00:15:39,613 --> 00:15:44,113
The first, the lowest levels of children enjoying reading that we'd seen for a very

236
00:15:44,142 --> 00:15:47,772
long time. And I think the industry, my part of the industry,

237
00:15:47,863 --> 00:15:53,803
Meryl's part as well, really came together along with the charity sector to really

238
00:15:54,553 --> 00:15:58,873
put together a coordinated campaign to try and get reading up the agenda.

239
00:15:59,412 --> 00:16:03,192
And I think the important thing about this year is that the future of reading isn't

240
00:16:03,222 --> 00:16:06,912
a publishing issue, isn't an author issue, isn't a bookseller issue.

241
00:16:07,092 --> 00:16:09,252
It's an economy-wide and societal issue.

242
00:16:09,912 --> 00:16:14,803
And the greatest thing that we've got at the end of this year is that we genuinely

243
00:16:14,863 --> 00:16:20,442
have political focus. It is a political priority at cabinet level to have a

244
00:16:20,532 --> 00:16:25,692
proper reading strategy for the country, and that is backed up by business support

245
00:16:26,892 --> 00:16:30,792
from our collective industry, and obviously authors have done a huge amount in this

246
00:16:30,882 --> 00:16:35,532
area as well. But also, importantly, the wider economy, the KPMGs of this world,

247
00:16:35,592 --> 00:16:37,542
the trusts and foundations.

248
00:16:39,192 --> 00:16:43,483
So, it's been a furious year in terms of activity.

249
00:16:44,742 --> 00:16:49,032
It's not always been perfect, as these things, when you kick things off and there

250
00:16:49,062 --> 00:16:50,292
are loads of architects,

251
00:16:53,352 --> 00:16:55,902
it's not going to be perfect, right? You have to all swim in the same direction.

252
00:16:55,932 --> 00:16:57,402
I think we made a lot of progress on it.

253
00:16:57,881 --> 00:17:02,712
I think the key now is, it will all have been for nothing if we ditch what we've

254
00:17:02,772 --> 00:17:06,522
done and go back to our old patterns, because frankly, our old patterns have not

255
00:17:06,553 --> 00:17:08,922
been working. Reading for pleasure has been plummeting.

256
00:17:08,952 --> 00:17:10,962
We need to think differently about this as an issue.

257

00:17:11,412 --> 00:17:13,633

Reading has to be fun, and that's the most...

258

00:17:13,692 --> 00:17:15,702

I mean, there are two things I want to say about this year.

259

00:17:15,792 --> 00:17:18,133

One is the narrative around reading change, right?

260

00:17:18,222 --> 00:17:21,642

Reading is not something that's a vitamin, that's good for you, that your teachers

261

00:17:21,702 --> 00:17:24,282

tell you you have to do, or your parents tell you you have to do.

262

00:17:24,702 --> 00:17:29,202

Reading is fun, and it's joyful. If you're into football, go all in and read into

263

00:17:29,263 --> 00:17:31,122

it. Let's take the snobbery out of reading.

264

00:17:31,182 --> 00:17:35,442

Let's take the sort of worthiness out of it and talk about the joy.

265

00:17:35,532 --> 00:17:39,132

If we can continue to do that from a narrative point of view, we'll have succeeded.

266

00:17:39,492 --> 00:17:42,642

And then there's a kind of ecosystem point of view, which is just all of us working

267

00:17:42,702 --> 00:17:47,472

together, publishers, agents, authors in this country, the booksellers, and also

268

00:17:47,502 --> 00:17:50,922

the wider economy and politicians coming together and saying, "This is an issue for

269

00:17:51,042 --> 00:17:54,282

all of us. We're all parents. We're all part of society.

270

00:17:54,372 --> 00:17:58,842

We all care about the economy. Let's do something together to solve this."

271

00:18:00,432 --> 00:18:00,763

Hear, hear.

272

00:18:00,822 --> 00:18:03,372

I was just going to say a quick... I thought that was brilliant.

273
00:18:03,432 --> 00:18:04,842
I was just going to say a quick thing on that.

274
00:18:04,902 --> 00:18:08,082
It's actually, when you were saying some different types of reading and fun,

275
00:18:08,772 --> 00:18:12,582
because I was talking to the head of reading at my kids' school this morning, and

276
00:18:13,362 --> 00:18:16,602
they've just ordered in a load of, which I just thought was really clever, a load

277
00:18:16,632 --> 00:18:21,642
of copies of "The Pino," because some kids, and one of my kids has-

278
00:18:24,197 --> 00:18:25,518
... really struggles with her reading.

279
00:18:26,659 --> 00:18:29,778
It's supposed to be fun, and it's not an expensive thing, and you don't actually

280
00:18:29,808 --> 00:18:32,598
need to get loads of copies because they all just share, share, and share around.

281
00:18:32,628 --> 00:18:33,948
And it's just getting them to look at

282
00:18:35,208 --> 00:18:38,748
those graphics, look at those little ways of using something like Vino, and then

283
00:18:38,808 --> 00:18:41,388
you're just beginning, you're getting, and all those kids who are finding it a bit

284
00:18:41,448 --> 00:18:45,409
harder. So, I love that idea, and that come out of him because he's so been

285
00:18:45,438 --> 00:18:47,899
involved in the National Year of Reading and all the things that he's said and

286
00:18:47,928 --> 00:18:49,518
whatever, thinking about ways they could

287
00:18:51,438 --> 00:18:53,928
rethink about how they're doing reading in the school.

288
00:18:53,958 --> 00:18:58,218
So, I just thought that was so incredible and great that it is having this genuine

289
00:18:58,278 --> 00:19:00,438
reach at this little state school in North London.

290
00:19:01,368 --> 00:19:07,339
And yeah, I hope that is showing across the country.

291
00:19:07,399 --> 00:19:11,748
I think just on the agent point of view and Association of Authors Agency, we...

292
00:19:12,888 --> 00:19:14,508
First of all, it has been amazing,

293
00:19:15,948 --> 00:19:19,339
and the data does look good, but I guess it will be another 20 years before we

294
00:19:19,399 --> 00:19:24,018
really, really, really know what's sunk in. So, we're going to have to watch.

295
00:19:24,108 --> 00:19:27,798
I really think it's so important. I love the idea of it being a decade of

296
00:19:29,028 --> 00:19:32,598
reading, forever reading, but the emphasis isn't on it because it could so easy

297
00:19:32,659 --> 00:19:33,798
just to slip away.

298
00:19:35,628 --> 00:19:39,018
I think we, as an agency, we're trying to really encourage, and people are busy and

299
00:19:39,048 --> 00:19:43,909
it's hard, whatever, but as much as possible, our authors in that space to say yes

300
00:19:43,968 --> 00:19:47,748
to school visits, to give their time for free where they possibly can.

301
00:19:47,778 --> 00:19:51,738
And I'll say to my big authors when they are in the kids' space, like, "I know it's

302
00:19:51,768 --> 00:19:56,268
really hard, but just to get, if you can fit in and try and just do three of these

303
00:19:56,328 --> 00:19:57,258
a year or something."

304
00:19:59,659 --> 00:20:02,028
And they sort of weigh up because they do private schools, they do state schools.

305

00:20:02,089 --> 00:20:05,868

If you do three state schools a year, and please, please, please try and do it,

306

00:20:05,988 --> 00:20:08,298

because those events just make such a difference to the kids.

307

00:20:08,328 --> 00:20:11,118

And obviously, it could be great authors too and sell copies, but they really mean

308

00:20:11,237 --> 00:20:11,899

a lot to the kids.

309

00:20:13,128 --> 00:20:15,288

And then I guess the other thing for us is always thinking about

310

00:20:16,848 --> 00:20:22,788

diversity and inclusion, back to that Vino story, just the types of books

311

00:20:22,878 --> 00:20:26,748

in schools, in school libraries, how people are reading, how people read

312

00:20:26,808 --> 00:20:29,659

differently, what people are seeing in the books, what libraries are stocking, what

313
00:20:29,718 --> 00:20:35,298
sorts of books. So again, we do lots across our Association of Authors Agents

314
00:20:35,358 --> 00:20:39,649
meetings, get different people in to talk to us about how we can be encouraging

315
00:20:41,089 --> 00:20:43,038
different sectors to think about this.

316
00:20:43,159 --> 00:20:45,888
But yeah, it has been great, and long may it continue.

317
00:20:48,228 --> 00:20:53,208
Thanks, Helen. For those that are members on the call, we do have some great

318
00:20:53,598 --> 00:20:58,248
resources on how to do an author visit and also guidance for schools when they're

319
00:20:58,278 --> 00:21:02,598
thinking about having an author visit, because there's some really practical tips

320
00:21:02,659 --> 00:21:06,678
and advice in there that is really worthwhile having a look at if you're at the

321
00:21:06,708 --> 00:21:09,618
beginning of your author school visits journey.

322
00:21:11,028 --> 00:21:12,649
Meryl, coming to you. Did you want

323
00:21:12,707 --> 00:21:15,498
to- Yeah, I agree with all that. Particularly Dan's

324
00:21:16,788 --> 00:21:18,858
points about the government commitment.

325
00:21:18,978 --> 00:21:23,839
I think that having that government level and at cabinet level is really important

326
00:21:23,899 --> 00:21:27,678
because, and funding will flow from that, and must flow from it.

327
00:21:27,708 --> 00:21:31,818
It must flow from the government, but also it unlocks doors from other

328
00:21:33,948 --> 00:21:38,208
philanthropists, I guess. So, because we need to change the conversation beyond...

329
00:21:38,298 --> 00:21:39,618
I think the industry is...

330
00:21:40,968 --> 00:21:42,888
We have all bought into this. We all understand it.

331
00:21:42,948 --> 00:21:46,159
We wouldn't be working in books if we didn't believe that this was true and that

332
00:21:46,518 --> 00:21:51,228
reading can be life-changing. And I think we have to be brave in forcing through

333
00:21:51,288 --> 00:21:54,438
our normal boundaries into new places.

334
00:21:54,498 --> 00:21:58,938
And I think lots of bookshops and libraries already do that, so it's been really

335
00:21:58,968 --> 00:22:02,958
nice to see them being able to shine a light on the work that they're already

336
00:22:03,018 --> 00:22:07,938
doing. And libraries are so important in communities and reaching out to people who

337
00:22:07,968 --> 00:22:08,868
aren't necessarily

338
00:22:10,159 --> 00:22:13,248
readers. And I think that collaboration across the industry has been really

339
00:22:13,308 --> 00:22:17,748
important. I think Dan and I and Helen, we've sat around tables that we possibly

340
00:22:17,778 --> 00:22:20,568
wouldn't have sat around before, when you've got that range of

341
00:22:21,798 --> 00:22:26,808
stakeholders. And I think that will have to be and will be, because we all want it

342
00:22:26,839 --> 00:22:27,678
to be a legacy

343
00:22:29,058 --> 00:22:34,458
of what's been going on. And I think the conversation about reading is underway,

344
00:22:34,698 --> 00:22:37,159
and I think we've got to continue that.

345
00:22:37,458 --> 00:22:41,388
I think putting reading at the heart for the government, I'm just halfway through

346
00:22:41,448 --> 00:22:46,248
that Frank Cottrell Boyce book, "The British Childhood," and he's so insightful

347
00:22:46,339 --> 00:22:50,628
about the need for early years, the commitment to early years reading, because

348
00:22:50,659 --> 00:22:53,268
that's where you set the bedrock down.

349
00:22:53,568 --> 00:22:58,518
And I think if we could get that commitment absolutely rock solid and have that

350
00:22:58,548 --> 00:23:00,409
conversation over the next decade.

351
00:23:00,768 --> 00:23:04,668
And I would also personally, I'd love to see a sort of role modeling aspect to this

352
00:23:04,848 --> 00:23:08,748
really put front and center, because we all know that if kids see adults reading,

353
00:23:09,108 --> 00:23:11,899
it's not just that we read to them, it's that they also see us read.

354
00:23:12,378 --> 00:23:16,638
And I think that could be really powerful. So, I think it's all to play for.

355
00:23:16,818 --> 00:23:20,778
And I think it can be easy to be a wee bit cynical, because as Dan said, we were

356
00:23:20,808 --> 00:23:25,698
building it as it was taking off. But I think now that we've got a commitment to a

357
00:23:25,788 --> 00:23:31,159
proper run at it, I think we could take a beat, take a breath, and then really make

358
00:23:31,218 --> 00:23:35,688
some good stuff happen. So that's really exciting, if a little bit daunting.

359
00:23:37,578 --> 00:23:41,808
I'm just picking up some of the things from the chat, because obviously for many

360
00:23:42,558 --> 00:23:45,468
and most of our members, time is money.

361
00:23:45,558 --> 00:23:47,388
And while some

362
00:23:49,428 --> 00:23:52,638
best-selling authors might be able to donate their time for free to go and do

363
00:23:52,728 --> 00:23:56,418
school visits, we would always advocate for authors to be paid for their time for

364
00:23:56,478 --> 00:24:01,518
school visits. And that's why we have the guidance to talk to libraries and schools

365
00:24:01,578 --> 00:24:03,708
about how to engage with an author

366
00:24:05,178 --> 00:24:10,638
for the majority of our members. And so, we would always advocate for authors to be

367
00:24:10,668 --> 00:24:13,308
paid for their time. And so, I just wanted to pick up on that point.

368
00:24:13,368 --> 00:24:15,678
That point is covered in our guidance.

369

00:24:16,038 --> 00:24:19,998

And also, it is so important, Meryl, as you say, that we start at the beginning,

370

00:24:20,089 --> 00:24:24,018

because picking up on one of the comments there in the Q&A about some secondary

371

00:24:24,078 --> 00:24:27,318

school children never having read a book independently.

372

00:24:27,589 --> 00:24:31,339

And so, if we're sowing seeds really early on, then hopefully that is a habit that

373

00:24:31,368 --> 00:24:36,258

will grow because they like doing it and they get something from reading, and

374

00:24:36,318 --> 00:24:38,118

whatever that is, in whatever format.

375

00:24:39,198 --> 00:24:43,308

I've just been clearing out some of my children's books from my mum's house, and I

376

00:24:43,399 --> 00:24:48,649

still just love the images, because I was reading those when I couldn't read the

377
00:24:48,707 --> 00:24:52,428
text, but the images are so powerful, and they connect you to that bit of your

378
00:24:52,488 --> 00:24:57,138
childhood. So, for many reasons, it's good to get into a library, into bookshops,

379
00:24:57,318 --> 00:25:00,498
and to connect with stories to share with your children.

380
00:25:00,528 --> 00:25:04,638
But my other mission this year has been reading in public, because I do strongly

381
00:25:04,668 --> 00:25:08,448
believe in that role modeling, and that if people see you do it, they might tweak

382
00:25:08,508 --> 00:25:13,218
an interest in them to go, "Yeah, I might want to not be on my screen all day every

383
00:25:13,278 --> 00:25:18,558
day, because that's work or that's school, and that's not for pleasure." And it

384
00:25:18,649 --> 00:25:23,718
just, for all of the myriad reasons why it's a good thing, expanding our horizons,

385
00:25:24,108 --> 00:25:27,048
and it's good for social cohesion, good for empathy.

386
00:25:27,438 --> 00:25:32,808
It's a good just way to, a quiet way to spend an afternoon when life is so busy and

387
00:25:32,899 --> 00:25:33,589
so full on.

388
00:25:35,028 --> 00:25:39,318
And I think there is that resistance, ongoing resistance to screens, as we're going

389
00:25:39,348 --> 00:25:42,858
to come onto, and technology. And so, a book is a very good thing.

390
00:25:43,158 --> 00:25:46,399
So, I'm also trying to pick up some of the Q&A questions as we go.

391
00:25:46,608 --> 00:25:49,548
I was having a look through. I think that's a really, really good point, and I

392
00:25:49,578 --> 00:25:52,279
should have said it, about getting paid. Absolutely.

393

00:25:52,368 --> 00:25:57,798

I do think that some of my authors, and across the industry, authors who can afford

394

00:25:58,458 --> 00:26:02,958

not to, should, personally. I think they can give up a bit of their time.

395

00:26:02,988 --> 00:26:06,468

And I know that might be controversial, because I think they should all get paid

396

00:26:06,498 --> 00:26:08,808

for the work they're doing, but I think in a crisis-

397

00:26:08,899 --> 00:26:09,169

Sorry

398

00:26:10,877 --> 00:26:11,508

... they should probably think about it.

399

00:26:11,538 --> 00:26:15,798

But I think absolutely, of course, out of those huge brand authors, absolutely must

400

00:26:15,828 --> 00:26:21,618

get paid to do it. And I think schools do hopefully will have at least some

401
00:26:21,678 --> 00:26:23,839
money to do that. But yeah, absolutely.

402
00:26:25,339 --> 00:26:29,389
Yeah. And there are ways and means of doing that to help people who might come

403
00:26:29,448 --> 00:26:35,389
after you in terms of ensuring that the expectation for pay is

404
00:26:35,448 --> 00:26:40,248
there. But as I say, a lot of people, or some people may be in a position to turn

405
00:26:40,308 --> 00:26:45,408
down that fee to give something back to their community and to society.

406
00:26:45,529 --> 00:26:45,708
So,

407
00:26:47,598 --> 00:26:50,478
okay, I'm just looking up in the chat.

408
00:26:50,568 --> 00:26:56,029
I'll move on to, as we talked about screens and

409
00:26:56,089 --> 00:27:00,318
technology, obviously we can't have a conversation without talking about AI, and

410
00:27:00,498 --> 00:27:06,258
2026 has been a year like no other in terms of the growing impacts of

411
00:27:06,348 --> 00:27:10,518
Gen AI, both on the publishing and books industry, and also on society.

412
00:27:10,578 --> 00:27:12,169
And so, I wanted to move on, if I may,

413
00:27:13,488 --> 00:27:18,618
onto generative AI, because it is a bit of a hydra-headed thing for our members.

414
00:27:18,708 --> 00:27:23,658
It's a multi-headed thing, which at the same time is a cannibal of creative works,

415
00:27:24,139 --> 00:27:28,458
a competitor in the marketplace, and yet some of our members are using it as a

416
00:27:28,518 --> 00:27:32,029
creative collaborator as well. So, however you see it, there's-

417

00:27:33,504 --> 00:27:38,814

It's an existential time for creators because they're seeing the negative impacts

418

00:27:38,904 --> 00:27:43,794

on their jobs, their livelihoods, their ability to earn a living, pay the bills

419

00:27:43,855 --> 00:27:47,424

from their work, which is changing at a speed that we've never seen before.

420

00:27:48,024 --> 00:27:53,215

And so it's a very scary time for our members, because the pace of change is so

421

00:27:53,274 --> 00:27:58,105

fast and we don't know what's coming next because we don't yet have regulation from

422

00:27:58,134 --> 00:28:00,415

government, which is what we've been calling for.

423

00:28:02,334 --> 00:28:04,344

Excuse me, my dog barking in the background.

424

00:28:05,004 --> 00:28:10,495

But we've been doing a lot of campaigning in this area together, and it has been

425
00:28:10,554 --> 00:28:14,725
one of the times where we could all come together and get behind the same message

426
00:28:14,784 --> 00:28:18,924
in terms of the copyright infringing actions of big tech.

427
00:28:19,374 --> 00:28:24,564
And we will be fighting for compensation or damages until we get that.

428
00:28:24,624 --> 00:28:28,764
So that's not something that we're going to put down, because we now know through

429
00:28:28,794 --> 00:28:33,264
the court disclosures that most of the commercial large language models have been

430
00:28:33,324 --> 00:28:38,004
trained on pirated copies of authors' works without permission or payment.

431
00:28:38,394 --> 00:28:42,715
And so that is something that we will continue to campaign on.

432
00:28:43,165 --> 00:28:45,564
And at the moment, actually, we're just seeing

433
00:28:47,124 --> 00:28:51,624
probably the biggest US case, the Anna Bartz versus Anthropic case settlement

434
00:28:51,715 --> 00:28:55,794
claims being... They'll start being paid out next week, I think, from the 23rd of

435
00:28:55,855 --> 00:28:59,394
November, the claims will start being paid out, and then any disputed claims will

436
00:28:59,424 --> 00:29:03,774
be... I think we have until the 20th of November, and then they'll be resolved and

437
00:29:03,834 --> 00:29:09,774
paid out thereafter. So we are starting to see payments come out from the lawsuits.

438
00:29:10,254 --> 00:29:14,124
And I wonder whether, Dan, you could give us a quick summary about where you feel

439
00:29:14,154 --> 00:29:17,965
we are at the moment from a legal perspective and where you think this might go in

440
00:29:18,114 --> 00:29:22,465
2027, because this has been something that, for our members, is their number one

441
00:29:22,524 --> 00:29:25,734
priority, is the number one risk to their careers and their livelihoods.

442
00:29:26,004 --> 00:29:30,624
And it's something that, ever since we heard about this back in November 2022,

443
00:29:30,774 --> 00:29:33,834
we've been campaigning heavily on together with the rest of the creative

444
00:29:33,894 --> 00:29:38,184
industries. So I wondered if you could perhaps talk a little bit about that to give

445
00:29:38,245 --> 00:29:41,394
our members a sense of what might happen in 2027.

446
00:29:42,475 --> 00:29:47,124
Thank you, Anna. And I just want to put it on record for your members, like all the

447
00:29:47,154 --> 00:29:49,225
work that you've done as the SOA on

448
00:29:50,634 --> 00:29:51,774
this incredibly important issue.

449
00:29:52,824 --> 00:29:56,844
I'll start from the point that I started from, if I may, when you asked about our

450
00:29:56,904 --> 00:29:58,284
top opportunities and challenges.

451
00:30:00,355 --> 00:30:05,605
We have seen the biggest and widest copyright theft the world has ever seen by AI

452
00:30:05,665 --> 00:30:11,574
companies. And it is absolutely critical that everybody who

453
00:30:11,634 --> 00:30:17,094
is in our jobs on screen here works together to try and make sure that the

454
00:30:17,304 --> 00:30:23,245
value of copyright is upheld and that our rights can be enforced in the modern

455
00:30:23,304 --> 00:30:29,245
content ecosystem. We have made some progress, but we haven't gone all the

456
00:30:29,304 --> 00:30:33,864
way. As all of you who are listening probably do know, the UK government started

457
00:30:33,894 --> 00:30:37,495
from a position where a copyright exception was going to be brought in to allow

458
00:30:37,584 --> 00:30:40,915
unfettered free training access to everybody's works.

459
00:30:41,995 --> 00:30:47,154
And through a huge collaborative effort, we have managed to row the government back

460
00:30:47,215 --> 00:30:49,374
from one end of the spectrum to the middle.

461
00:30:49,855 --> 00:30:54,894
So what we've not succeeded in doing is get the UK government to say, "Copyright

462
00:30:54,954 --> 00:30:58,824
applies to the training of large language models."

463
00:31:02,965 --> 00:31:04,644
Dan, I think we just lost your audio.

464
00:31:05,394 --> 00:31:05,544
So...

465
00:31:08,034 --> 00:31:10,044
Oh, I'm so sorry. Can you still hear me?

466
00:31:10,554 --> 00:31:10,824
Yeah.

467
00:31:10,915 --> 00:31:11,965
Okay. So,

468
00:31:13,734 --> 00:31:16,915
UK government's come back to the middle ground, basically, where they're saying

469
00:31:16,975 --> 00:31:21,864
it's not free access, but they've stopped short of saying that copyright applies in

470
00:31:21,894 --> 00:31:27,024
an AI context. So we need to continue to fight for this, both in the UK and

471
00:31:27,144 --> 00:31:29,844
globally. And what I would say is this is a global fight.

472
00:31:29,934 --> 00:31:32,665
There's no point in winning it here and losing it in the US.

473
00:31:33,864 --> 00:31:39,534
We need a coordinated regulatory and legal strategy to make sure

474
00:31:39,624 --> 00:31:41,304
that authors

475
00:31:41,334 --> 00:31:46,465
can...

476
00:31:46,975 --> 00:31:52,915
dominated by AI. In terms of the legal cases that are live, Anna talked

477
00:31:52,975 --> 00:31:57,294
about Bartz Anthropic, and obviously there's a huge damages, statutory damages

478
00:31:57,355 --> 00:32:03,024
consideration there. There's also other cases, including a class action against

479
00:32:03,084 --> 00:32:06,745
Meta involving publishers and an author and many others.

480
00:32:08,725 --> 00:32:10,764
In the UK, we don't have a

481
00:32:12,534 --> 00:32:16,614
kind of statement copyright case on the books yet.

482
00:32:17,154 --> 00:32:20,605
It's worth saying that the UK and US legal systems are different.

483
00:32:20,694 --> 00:32:24,954
So in the US, you have statutory damages, which effectively means that a judge can

484
00:32:25,074 --> 00:32:29,965
award a damages level across a class of individuals, for example, the author

485
00:32:30,054 --> 00:32:30,475
public.

486
00:32:32,484 --> 00:32:36,144
This is why we're seeing the kind of huge damages levels that we're seeing in Bartz

487
00:32:36,234 --> 00:32:41,814
Anthropic. The UK legal system doesn't work like that and doesn't apply

488
00:32:41,844 --> 00:32:44,694
damages.

489
00:32:46,314 --> 00:32:52,165
So in UK context, what you would be looking for from a copyright precedential case

490
00:32:52,225 --> 00:32:56,995
in publishing, in music, in one of the creative industry sectors would be

491
00:32:57,024 --> 00:32:59,334
predominantly to create good law.

492
00:32:59,934 --> 00:33:04,764
So what we're looking for here in terms of a content ecosystem is really good

493
00:33:04,824 --> 00:33:08,904
copyright and IP laws here and in the US that are enforceable.

494
00:33:09,564 --> 00:33:09,804
So,

495
00:33:12,114 --> 00:33:13,884
we want to create good law in the UK.

496
00:33:14,544 --> 00:33:17,814
We also want to create a fair market for licensing.

497

00:33:18,264 --> 00:33:21,894

Now, I know AI licensing will be a difficult topic for many on this call, and

498

00:33:21,924 --> 00:33:25,944

there'll be different views about exactly how or whether that should transpire.

499

00:33:26,245 --> 00:33:28,915

But the point about licensing is you have a choice, right?

500

00:33:29,334 --> 00:33:30,984

And that you can-

501

00:33:36,894 --> 00:33:38,965

Dan, your audio is going in and out.

502

00:33:39,023 --> 00:33:43,254

... you choose to commercialise. If you create good law, we want to create a fair

503

00:33:43,314 --> 00:33:48,174

licensing market, and there is also a consideration about damages in the UK from

504

00:33:48,264 --> 00:33:52,674

any potential copyright litigation, but it is not like Bartz Anthropic.

505
00:33:53,574 --> 00:33:56,544
We don't have statutory damages in the same

506
00:33:58,284 --> 00:34:04,254
way. So there's a huge amount... We

507
00:34:04,284 --> 00:34:08,784
will keep fighting politically for fair rights for authors and for publishers in

508
00:34:08,814 --> 00:34:13,674
the AI context. We'll continue to coordinate globally with the US and other markets

509
00:34:13,734 --> 00:34:14,574
around the world,

510
00:34:16,105 --> 00:34:21,564
and we'll continue to think very carefully about our legal

511
00:34:21,594 --> 00:34:24,984
positions. I'm sorry if my tech dropped in and out.

512
00:34:25,134 --> 00:34:26,515
Hopefully you caught most of that, Anna.

513
00:34:27,654 --> 00:34:31,614
We did. Thanks, Dan. It is dropping in and out a bit, but we got the gist of it.

514
00:34:32,334 --> 00:34:36,234
There is a lot going on in this space, and it needs to be an international

515
00:34:36,294 --> 00:34:41,784
response, and things are happening at speed, but we'll continue to keep members

516
00:34:41,844 --> 00:34:47,094
updated when we hear anything new, because we know this is your number one issue,

517
00:34:47,634 --> 00:34:50,334
because of the negative impacts on your income.

518
00:34:53,275 --> 00:34:56,754
Meryl and Hellie, did you want to come in on any of that, or can we move on to

519
00:34:56,814 --> 00:34:58,644
perhaps another topic on the list?

520
00:34:58,674 --> 00:35:04,494
Because I know Dan and I do probably a lot of the discussions around the legal

521
00:35:04,584 --> 00:35:09,595
cases and how we can help influence policy in the UK, but if there's anything else

522
00:35:09,623 --> 00:35:10,074
you want to say.

523
00:35:10,163 --> 00:35:12,804
Yeah. I would only, I think, we're foursquare behind you.

524
00:35:13,044 --> 00:35:17,814
Obviously, it's less pointy for booksellers, although they've got strong views on

525
00:35:17,874 --> 00:35:21,624
it. I think one of the things that has only become clear to me recently is the

526
00:35:22,194 --> 00:35:24,924
threat coming from agentic AI in retail.

527
00:35:25,764 --> 00:35:28,494
When we had our last council meeting, some of the booksellers were saying they've

528
00:35:28,855 --> 00:35:33,025
already had customers come in asking for recommendations, and they get into that

529
00:35:33,054 --> 00:35:36,954
conversation where they're hand-selling books, and then they've said, "Oh, I'll

530
00:35:37,044 --> 00:35:40,914
take all that away and I'll..." They used to, they'd go on Amazon and buy the book

531
00:35:40,944 --> 00:35:43,314
on Amazon, sometimes in the bookshop, which is quite rude.

532
00:35:44,004 --> 00:35:47,275
But they're now saying, "Oh, I just want to run that through Claude." And then they

533
00:35:47,304 --> 00:35:49,014
go away and they never come back. So they're clearly...

534
00:35:49,794 --> 00:35:53,334
And there's certainly research starting to emerge where people, consumers, are

535
00:35:53,364 --> 00:35:57,624
starting to trust recommendations from AI over human recommendation.

536
00:35:57,984 --> 00:36:02,994
Now, that's got huge implications for retail, because what are you if no one's

537
00:36:03,054 --> 00:36:08,424
valuing your opinion in a sort of professional environment? That's troubling.

538
00:36:08,724 --> 00:36:13,914
So that's just another aspect of this, and let alone the copyright theft, which as

539
00:36:13,974 --> 00:36:17,244
Dan's very vividly laid out. So it's everywhere.

540
00:36:18,144 --> 00:36:21,744
Yeah, there's so many impacts that we hadn't even imagined.

541
00:36:21,924 --> 00:36:26,634
We spent most of this year advising our members on all of the AI-generated scams,

542
00:36:26,694 --> 00:36:32,244
which it's always a criminal behind the scam, but AI has just enabled it to target,

543
00:36:32,484 --> 00:36:36,894
and particularly authors in the publishing industry, at scale, at a rate that we

544
00:36:36,924 --> 00:36:40,824
haven't seen before. So we're seeing lots of unintended consequences like that

545
00:36:40,884 --> 00:36:42,084
because of which

546
00:36:43,525 --> 00:36:45,054
the scale it enables any-

547
00:36:46,985 --> 00:36:50,916
... that actor to work at. But, Hellie, before we move on, did you want to say

548
00:36:50,946 --> 00:36:52,656
anything on that topic?

549
00:36:53,076 --> 00:36:55,536
I think it covered it all. It's awful.

550
00:36:55,806 --> 00:36:59,946
And obviously, you've got lots of authors on our books across the association who

551
00:36:59,976 --> 00:37:00,096
are

552
00:37:01,326 --> 00:37:07,026
trying to work out this payment, getting their payments back is very complicated

553
00:37:07,086 --> 00:37:10,446
and very grateful to all the work you guys have been doing, and I know you've been

554
00:37:10,476 --> 00:37:11,345
doing an awful lot.

555
00:37:12,876 --> 00:37:18,156
Yeah, I think the admin around the Anthropic case has been complicated and

556
00:37:18,216 --> 00:37:21,366
time-consuming for everyone. And again, that's when we're seeing the burden put

557
00:37:21,456 --> 00:37:24,636
onto the author and publisher to get money back.

558
00:37:24,696 --> 00:37:29,226
And so, I think this is the first one we've seen, so I think the settlement

559
00:37:29,677 --> 00:37:34,386
administrators have experienced it. Hopefully, we'll learn from the next one.

560
00:37:34,866 --> 00:37:39,366
But there's a lot of work going in from everyone in the industry to help get some

561
00:37:39,456 --> 00:37:42,156
of this money back from these cases.

562
00:37:43,386 --> 00:37:47,376
Okay, with an eye on the time then, I'll move on to the next area that we talked

563
00:37:47,466 --> 00:37:53,317
about. And Dan, as you mentioned at the outset there, as industry

564
00:37:53,346 --> 00:37:55,177
bodies, we work collaboratively.

565
00:37:55,656 --> 00:37:59,376
And in recent years, that's been around behavior with the cross-industry

566
00:37:59,406 --> 00:38:05,166
professional value statement that was originally brought out a few years ago, and

567
00:38:05,196 --> 00:38:10,356
it's due to be renewed next year because we renew it every couple of years.

568
00:38:10,896 --> 00:38:14,886
And so, in light of the high-profile cases that are coming out now,

569
00:38:16,206 --> 00:38:20,256
you touched on it at the beginning, what do you think we could be doing more of to

570
00:38:20,286 --> 00:38:25,626
protect the people in the business of publishing, wherever they are in the pathway

571
00:38:26,136 --> 00:38:26,736
and pipeline?

572
00:38:26,976 --> 00:38:29,826
Well, it's an interesting... Hopefully, my tech holds up for this bit.

573
00:38:29,856 --> 00:38:31,297
Apologies all who are watching.

574
00:38:32,946 --> 00:38:36,456
It's an interesting day today to be having this discussion because Lisa Nandy, the

575
00:38:36,516 --> 00:38:41,706
Culture Secretary, you'll have seen this reported in the press, has brought in

576
00:38:41,797 --> 00:38:45,456
leaders from across the creative industries and the broadcasters.

577
00:38:46,206 --> 00:38:50,916
So, it'll be all the broadcasters, all the major labels in music,

578
00:38:52,026 --> 00:38:53,586
representatives from publishing,

579
00:38:54,846 --> 00:38:58,386
representatives from the Premier League and sporting organizations, all to go in to

580
00:38:58,446 --> 00:39:00,996
talk about how we talk about

581
00:39:02,346 --> 00:39:07,866
how we manage imbalances of power, and how we spot coordinated

582
00:39:07,986 --> 00:39:10,506
patterns of behavior within the creative sectors.

583
00:39:10,956 --> 00:39:13,116
And I think it's really important.

584
00:39:13,626 --> 00:39:18,366
Safeguarding is the priority of staff, and I think talking on behalf of my cohort,

585
00:39:18,427 --> 00:39:21,786
the publishing companies, I think there'll be a lot of serious, considered

586
00:39:21,846 --> 00:39:26,286
conversations about how everybody safeguards their staff and looks after their

587
00:39:26,346 --> 00:39:30,936
people at this time. I think in terms of the associations that you see represented

588
00:39:31,026 --> 00:39:34,026
here, there are two things really, and they're probably...

589
00:39:34,086 --> 00:39:37,686
Anna, you and I haven't talked about this yet, but they're probably two connected

590
00:39:37,776 --> 00:39:42,067
things. One is we have a professional commitment, which we've all worked on

591
00:39:42,126 --> 00:39:45,846
periodically, and we need to look at that again and check and see how we can

592
00:39:45,876 --> 00:39:51,726
improve it. But there's also this organization called CISA, which is the Creative

593
00:39:51,786 --> 00:39:57,456
Industries Independent Standards Authority. It is a regulator for...

594
00:39:58,297 --> 00:40:01,835
It's a sort of whistleblowing organization for behavior within the creative

595
00:40:01,896 --> 00:40:03,606
industries. And it started off in other sectors.

596
00:40:03,636 --> 00:40:08,286
It started off in music, film, and TV because there were specific problems related

597
00:40:08,346 --> 00:40:11,556
to that, those perceived to be in those sectors, but they're expanding it to

598
00:40:11,616 --> 00:40:15,427
publishing next year. And I think what we need to do as organizations is work on

599
00:40:15,547 --> 00:40:18,966
our shared professional commitment and work out what our values are and what we

600
00:40:18,996 --> 00:40:24,067
want to say our values are as the broad, publishing in its broadest sense, what our

601
00:40:24,126 --> 00:40:27,876
values are to the world. And then we want to feed that in to the Creative

602
00:40:27,936 --> 00:40:32,076
Industries Independent Standards Authority and work out how that body can

603
00:40:33,576 --> 00:40:37,297
represent our sector. And just to explain to those who've never heard of this

604
00:40:37,326 --> 00:40:40,236
before, because I've had meetings directly with them to understand what they do,

605
00:40:41,346 --> 00:40:44,616
predominantly, they're a standards body, but they're also going to be able to spot

606
00:40:44,677 --> 00:40:46,326
coordinated patterns of behavior.

607
00:40:46,446 --> 00:40:47,856
So, where,

608
00:40:49,656 --> 00:40:52,986
for example, an author who is published by many different publishing companies,

609
00:40:53,076 --> 00:40:56,556
they might see it as a pattern of behavior within one publishing company, but not

610
00:40:56,616 --> 00:40:58,986
be able to spot it over a series of interactions.

611
00:40:59,556 --> 00:41:03,516
What CISA will be able to do, will be able to take a bigger holistic helicopter

612
00:41:03,576 --> 00:41:06,696
view and kind of spot those instances.

613
00:41:06,876 --> 00:41:09,636
Same would go with production companies in TV.

614
00:41:10,086 --> 00:41:15,366
So, it's an incredibly serious topic, and I think I need to talk about it with my

615
00:41:15,396 --> 00:41:18,096
membership as an industry about how we engage jointly.

616
00:41:18,126 --> 00:41:22,806
And I think there is a macro conversation to be had, Anna, with you and Meryl and

617
00:41:22,896 --> 00:41:24,427
Hellie, you as well, of course.

618
00:41:25,026 --> 00:41:28,266
Because I think that CISA will help to close the loop, because obviously, the

619
00:41:28,297 --> 00:41:32,526
cross-industry professional values statement sits at the top, and CISA would sit

620
00:41:32,586 --> 00:41:37,206
above that because... And below that are all our organizational policies, dignity,

621
00:41:37,266 --> 00:41:41,616
respect, and other policies. And then we have on our own websites how you can

622
00:41:42,186 --> 00:41:48,126
report a concern. But as you say, for unemployment law changes have helped with

623
00:41:48,156 --> 00:41:52,567
that recently. But as a self-employed freelancer, if you're going from job to job,

624
00:41:53,226 --> 00:41:55,266
you might not know who to report it to.

625
00:41:55,326 --> 00:42:01,116
And so, having CISA as the authority that you can report a concern, and feel

626
00:42:01,146 --> 00:42:05,016
like you've done something, you haven't just turned a blind eye, you've seen

627
00:42:05,076 --> 00:42:09,396
something, you've witnessed it, you report the concern, and then they can collect

628
00:42:10,716 --> 00:42:15,666
the information so that if there are recurring patterns of behavior, they can be

629
00:42:15,696 --> 00:42:19,116
investigated and dealt with, because there aren't the

630
00:42:21,096 --> 00:42:26,826
HR processes in place if this person or this behavior is not

631
00:42:26,856 --> 00:42:28,656
within the workplace, so to speak.

632
00:42:29,286 --> 00:42:35,136
So, I think that's an opportunity for industry to work with CISA to ensure that

633
00:42:35,196 --> 00:42:38,526
there is a system for everybody to be able to safely report a concern.

634
00:42:40,506 --> 00:42:46,026
Yeah, and I think having that ombudsman-type approach is an improvement because

635
00:42:47,286 --> 00:42:51,996
however big we feel as an industry, we're quite a small industry.

636
00:42:52,086 --> 00:42:54,067
So, it's actually really helpful.

637
00:42:54,126 --> 00:42:59,916
And Dan facilitated CISA coming to talk to a group of industry

638
00:42:59,976 --> 00:43:03,427
bodies. We had them to our council meeting, and I think them becoming part of the

639
00:43:03,456 --> 00:43:07,596
book industry is going to be really helpful because it gives all of us an extra

640
00:43:07,716 --> 00:43:13,625
support as organizations, but it also gives an accountability process, which didn't

641
00:43:13,686 --> 00:43:16,506
exist before and would be quite hard to create from scratch.

642
00:43:17,255 --> 00:43:18,666
So, it's really good that they exist.

643
00:43:21,516 --> 00:43:21,666
Yeah.

644
00:43:24,306 --> 00:43:27,456
Hellie, is there anything there that you would feed in from your perspective?

645
00:43:27,547 --> 00:43:32,047
Or I know you've been to some of these meetings with us as well, and it's been

646
00:43:32,047 --> 00:43:34,896
splendid, isn't it, with other small industries to work together and-

647
00:43:34,986 --> 00:43:37,206
Yeah. No, 100%. I guess it's always...

648
00:43:38,226 --> 00:43:42,456
I think the David Walliams thing is truly horrific.

649
00:43:43,056 --> 00:43:48,966
And what's really scary is that most of us have known this is coming for,

650
00:43:49,056 --> 00:43:54,396
I'd say, 10 years, that this has been rumblings of this, and that's disgusting.

651
00:43:55,776 --> 00:44:01,206
It's just been this conversation in publishing for so long, and yet young women

652
00:44:01,236 --> 00:44:04,686
were sent, publicity teams were sent out to his house alone.

653
00:44:04,746 --> 00:44:09,186
And when this has been rumbling and lawyers have been asking questions for 10

654
00:44:09,276 --> 00:44:14,706
years, it's not acceptable, and we do all need to work harder at

655
00:44:14,946 --> 00:44:18,306
protecting staff and thinking about how we can work together.

656
00:44:19,356 --> 00:44:22,236
I guess from sort of a day-to-day agent point of view, feeding into that, we

657
00:44:24,096 --> 00:44:26,346
have to take responsibility as well as agents.

658
00:44:26,916 --> 00:44:31,056
And we can fire clients, of course we can, and

659
00:44:32,436 --> 00:44:34,836
we have to be careful when we think...

660
00:44:36,096 --> 00:44:40,927
Obviously, making sure that it's on the right side of not accusing people

661
00:44:40,985 --> 00:44:44,616
who haven't done anything wrong, but we have to take responsibility and look at our

662
00:44:44,677 --> 00:44:47,886
list and be sure we're representing people who we truly feel

663
00:44:49,177 --> 00:44:54,606
are the good people. I guess what that doesn't mean we don't do is obviously, and I

664
00:44:54,636 --> 00:44:57,996
think this is interesting, and I was looking back in our book and publishing

665
00:44:58,056 --> 00:44:59,376
industry's professional values.

666
00:45:01,086 --> 00:45:03,576
And there's a bit at the beginning just about we understand the power of what is

667
00:45:03,636 --> 00:45:06,846
printed and published. And I think we can't...

668
00:45:07,236 --> 00:45:09,906
There will be a broad range of books published, and there should be.

669
00:45:09,966 --> 00:45:13,297
There will be very right-wing things, there will be very left-wing things, there

670
00:45:13,326 --> 00:45:16,297
will be everything in between. That will always happen.

671
00:45:16,927 --> 00:45:21,547
But it's that the power of what is printed and published, we have to be so careful

672
00:45:21,636 --> 00:45:26,826
about the hate speech and as agents taking

673
00:45:26,856 --> 00:45:32,406
responsibility about that and making sure that it doesn't step into vile

674
00:45:36,246 --> 00:45:40,086
communication. So, I just think day-to-day, looking at our responsibility, what we

675
00:45:40,116 --> 00:45:44,916
can do, our involvement in the process is very important.

676
00:45:46,326 --> 00:45:49,236
And there needs to be that freedom to publish and freedom of expression.

677
00:45:49,326 --> 00:45:49,866
Absolutely.

678
00:45:49,927 --> 00:45:53,526
In an unregulated industry where there is such a power imbalance, having these

679
00:45:53,586 --> 00:45:56,196
kinds of policies and procedures in place-

680
00:45:56,526 --> 00:45:57,186
Absolutely

681
00:45:57,305 --> 00:46:02,916
... helps protect people when there is that either an abuse of power or

682
00:46:03,006 --> 00:46:03,817
something goes wrong.

683
00:46:04,866 --> 00:46:06,666
Just an additional, just to throw in.

684
00:46:06,756 --> 00:46:11,346
It's an interesting thing for us because booksellers, as is also true of

685
00:46:11,376 --> 00:46:14,976
librarians, are in the front line of this. We saw that during the pandemic.

686
00:46:15,156 --> 00:46:19,896
They're actual frontline workers, retailers, and they can often be getting abuse

687
00:46:19,927 --> 00:46:23,406
and intimidation from customers, right, who are coming in with a culture wars

688
00:46:23,466 --> 00:46:29,196
position on X or Y or Z. And we've had an increasing number of reports of this,

689
00:46:29,256 --> 00:46:31,626
which is horrifying, and you see that in the library community as well.

690
00:46:33,096 --> 00:46:38,196
And the protection of those frontline workers as well as those that are inside the

691
00:46:39,067 --> 00:46:44,976
industry who are struggling is equally important, that you have to

692
00:46:45,006 --> 00:46:47,556
protect those people from there. Because you even have lone workers in a bookshop,

693
00:46:48,666 --> 00:46:53,047
who, again, could be a young woman or a young person of any description.

694
00:46:54,216 --> 00:46:58,656
And so you've seen real changes there with employment law in terms of how young

695
00:46:58,716 --> 00:47:04,506
people are protected on the front line, in terms of practical measures that

696
00:47:04,596 --> 00:47:08,286
your members are making themselves to ensure that-

697

00:47:08,376 --> 00:47:12,846

I think the bookshop owners are having to be aware. They are aware of it.

698

00:47:12,876 --> 00:47:16,506

They'll have it reported to them by their staff, and they're well aware of it

699

00:47:16,567 --> 00:47:21,067

themselves. You're public-facing. That's part of the job, to a certain extent.

700

00:47:21,096 --> 00:47:23,526

You have to be able to de-escalate, defuse.

701

00:47:24,396 --> 00:47:28,626

We've got information on our skill set about how to do all those things, and you

702

00:47:28,656 --> 00:47:32,766

wouldn't really... I'd rather live in a world where I didn't have to tell

703

00:47:32,826 --> 00:47:37,506

booksellers how to de-escalate a potentially violent confrontation in a bookshop.

704

00:47:37,716 --> 00:47:43,626

That's horrific. But that's where we are, so we have to be able to facilitate that,

705
00:47:43,686 --> 00:47:44,136
haven't we?

706
00:47:45,486 --> 00:47:45,606
Yeah.

707
00:47:47,106 --> 00:47:50,436
We have 10 minutes left, but we did have another area we're going to discuss, and

708
00:47:50,466 --> 00:47:52,686
we might come back to that if we have time.

709
00:47:52,746 --> 00:47:57,427
But I am conscious that I want to get to some of the questions in the Q&A box to

710
00:47:57,456 --> 00:48:01,236
ensure that our members' questions are answered to the best of our ability.

711
00:48:02,016 --> 00:48:04,386
So I'm going to go to the Q&A box now.

712
00:48:05,166 --> 00:48:08,976
In terms of, I'm working backwards here, but the guidance for authors who might be

713
00:48:09,036 --> 00:48:11,436
accused of using AI to write their books.

714
00:48:12,186 --> 00:48:16,836
Certainly, the SoA is currently finalizing some guidance that we're going to put on

715
00:48:16,866 --> 00:48:22,177
our website because this is part of what we advise members on every day in terms of

716
00:48:22,206 --> 00:48:26,677
our bread-and-butter advisory work, and we advise on contract clauses around AI.

717
00:48:26,797 --> 00:48:32,136
We advise on decisions to help inform members about decisions that they might

718
00:48:33,786 --> 00:48:38,317
want to make around AI licensing. But in terms of AI allegations, that's been a hot

719
00:48:38,376 --> 00:48:43,116
topic over the summer. So it is something that we're working on in terms of

720
00:48:43,116 --> 00:48:44,677
bringing out some guidance to help members.

721
00:48:45,486 --> 00:48:50,736
Because obviously, for the individual author, any allegations are hugely harmful

722
00:48:50,766 --> 00:48:56,706
for them in terms of the potential to lose deals, to end their careers, to impact

723
00:48:56,766 --> 00:49:01,746
on their sales. Whereas, possibly agents and publishers might be a bit more

724
00:49:02,196 --> 00:49:08,106
protected from allegations. But for one author, an allegation has huge

725
00:49:08,166 --> 00:49:11,047
consequences. So we will be bringing out guidance there.

726
00:49:13,146 --> 00:49:15,936
I've answered that, but does anyone want to feed in on-

727
00:49:15,966 --> 00:49:20,766
Feed into that just quickly, just because this is obviously my life at the moment,

728
00:49:20,826 --> 00:49:23,406
is talking to authors in early stages of books.

729
00:49:23,616 --> 00:49:28,806
And authors are really scared, and it's horrible, and it feels witch-hunty.

730
00:49:28,866 --> 00:49:33,396
And yeah, I'm sure lots of us have seen everything over the summer.

731
00:49:33,486 --> 00:49:37,956
We had a very big book deal. It was probably worth 10 million, completely happening

732
00:49:38,016 --> 00:49:41,106
around the time of this big one in the US, but luckily ours got slightly

733
00:49:41,646 --> 00:49:43,356
overshadowed press-wise because of that.

734
00:49:43,386 --> 00:49:46,656
But yeah, it was probably 10 million for the author who was in her 20s,

735
00:49:47,886 --> 00:49:49,567
self-publishing, which imploded.

736
00:49:50,436 --> 00:49:55,986
I truly believe that author wrote their book, and I think where the situation got

737

00:49:56,047 --> 00:49:59,317

particularly bad with that, and it was really bad, particularly in the US

738

00:49:59,346 --> 00:50:03,156

publisher, it was pretty vile and quick to make an assumption on that one.

739

00:50:04,177 --> 00:50:09,486

But I think where the mistake came into it between us and the author is the author

740

00:50:09,547 --> 00:50:13,236

wasn't honest with us from the beginning exactly how they'd used it.

741

00:50:13,476 --> 00:50:19,446

And we're making a point now of saying to authors, "I

742

00:50:19,536 --> 00:50:22,476

very much imagine most of you will be using AI in some form.

743

00:50:22,806 --> 00:50:27,456

Spell check is a form." So I say to people now, "How are you using it?

744

00:50:27,516 --> 00:50:29,646

Just tell me how, because you will be using it.

745
00:50:29,736 --> 00:50:34,356
Just talk me through it as early as possible because I need to know where we're at

746
00:50:34,416 --> 00:50:37,956
from the beginning so I go into that sale of the book with full transparency and

747
00:50:38,047 --> 00:50:42,456
clarity so I can fight your corner every step of the way." And what happened with

748
00:50:42,486 --> 00:50:48,186
this poor author is they wrote that book, but they edited it with an

749
00:50:48,276 --> 00:50:52,026
AI function that probably was too heavy-handed with the editing.

750
00:50:52,326 --> 00:50:54,817
And if we had known that, we would have helped that author.

751
00:50:54,846 --> 00:50:57,456
We would have stepped back a bit. We would have looked at that material again.

752
00:50:57,516 --> 00:51:01,086
We would have figured out how we could go back to the original document of that

753
00:51:01,146 --> 00:51:04,297
book and et cetera. But we didn't, and that's where we got caught out, and that's

754
00:51:04,326 --> 00:51:07,986
where it's trust, and it all fell apart a bit.

755
00:51:08,047 --> 00:51:13,566
So being upfront as possible with your agents, if you're doing it

756
00:51:13,626 --> 00:51:15,906
direct, with the publisher about

757
00:51:17,916 --> 00:51:19,506
what you have done in that process.

758
00:51:19,566 --> 00:51:20,016
But also,

759
00:51:21,666 --> 00:51:23,736
having a good agent who will fight your back and help you.

760
00:51:24,066 --> 00:51:29,316
And it's really scary, I get, because there is no rules at the moment.

761
00:51:29,376 --> 00:51:33,307
So I can't say, "You're allowed to use that and not that, and yes this, and maybe

762
00:51:33,366 --> 00:51:37,476
that," because the publishers don't have those rules. We don't have those rules.

763
00:51:37,536 --> 00:51:40,536
There is a moment of flux at the moment.

764
00:51:40,596 --> 00:51:44,616
And in a way, this author who lost 10 million, in 10 years' time probably would

765
00:51:44,677 --> 00:51:48,396
not, but she was a case study, and it came down hard. And we have to be careful.

766
00:51:48,456 --> 00:51:52,146
We have to protect human authors as a society of authors doing so much work on.

767
00:51:52,206 --> 00:51:56,406
But I think, yeah, there are no rules. It's incredibly hard.

768
00:51:57,186 --> 00:52:03,036
Talk to your agent where you have one about the situation, and we

769
00:52:03,096 --> 00:52:04,837
will have your back and fight for you.

770
00:52:06,576 --> 00:52:10,746
Yeah, and I think to support what you're saying there, Helle, is that

771
00:52:12,036 --> 00:52:17,047
we're coming up with new guidance notes all the time for members in terms of this

772
00:52:17,136 --> 00:52:22,626
fast-evolving situation. And one area of guidance we've been working on over the

773
00:52:22,656 --> 00:52:26,166
summer, again, has been about author transparency statements, because some are

774
00:52:26,226 --> 00:52:31,027
choosing themselves to work with transparency statements in addition to their

775
00:52:31,326 --> 00:52:35,736
warranty so that they can be as transparent as possible when they're taking their

776
00:52:35,797 --> 00:52:39,066
manuscript to someone so that they are covering their own back.

777

00:52:39,126 --> 00:52:43,656

We've also seen different tech startups helping with tracking-

778

00:52:43,837 --> 00:52:43,986

Yeah

779

00:52:44,975 --> 00:52:49,297

... how something has been made. But it's only ever going to be a human author at

780

00:52:49,326 --> 00:52:52,446

the very beginning, because as soon as an editor or others get involved-

781

00:52:52,536 --> 00:52:52,837

Yeah

782

00:52:52,895 --> 00:52:56,766

... it's going to have someone else holding the pen at points if you've got a

783

00:52:56,826 --> 00:53:00,696

really hands-on editor. And so I think at the moment, we're in such flux, and there

784

00:53:00,996 --> 00:53:04,807

are no ground rules, that I do think in a few years' time, we'll be in a very

785
00:53:04,837 --> 00:53:10,027
different place. And I think for me, in terms of what authors can do for

786
00:53:10,087 --> 00:53:15,576
themselves, it's be open with your agent, with your publisher, and with yourself

787
00:53:15,636 --> 00:53:17,587
about where you're using AI and where you're not.

788
00:53:17,616 --> 00:53:20,916
And that is so hard to see at the moment because it is in everything.

789
00:53:22,027 --> 00:53:26,587
So this is an industry that is based on trust, and we need to

790
00:53:27,906 --> 00:53:31,746
lean into that and be as open and transparent as we can about how something is

791
00:53:31,777 --> 00:53:35,527
made, and also to be kind to each other during the process because-

792
00:53:35,766 --> 00:53:36,096
Agreed.

793
00:53:37,837 --> 00:53:42,006
In that particular situation, that was a real, like, "We have to protect this young

794
00:53:42,036 --> 00:53:46,986
woman." And the comments online and how she was treated were horrific.

795
00:53:47,226 --> 00:53:51,307
Scary, scary, scary. Back to the harassment, bullying bit of publishing, where

796
00:53:51,366 --> 00:53:56,286
people just need to be really careful that people can make mistakes, but people are

797
00:53:56,496 --> 00:53:56,916
human.

798
00:53:58,087 --> 00:53:58,416
Yeah.

799
00:53:59,826 --> 00:54:03,456
Switching to another area, in the questions, you mentioned, Helle, at the beginning

800
00:54:03,547 --> 00:54:07,297
about self-published authors, independent authors, independently published authors,

801
00:54:07,506 --> 00:54:13,476
and how do you feel it is the best way for independently published authors

802
00:54:13,866 --> 00:54:19,206
to meet with agents? The person in the chat is mentioning their Substack community

803
00:54:19,236 --> 00:54:20,376
called Writing Meet Editor

804
00:54:21,576 --> 00:54:24,186
for writers and editors, whether they're self-published, traditionally published,

805
00:54:24,337 --> 00:54:25,057
or both.

806
00:54:26,587 --> 00:54:30,666
Started partly because this member felt that the two worlds operate so differently

807
00:54:30,726 --> 00:54:31,087
at the moment.

808
00:54:31,116 --> 00:54:31,596
Yeah.

809
00:54:31,626 --> 00:54:33,576
And it's hard to find an agent anyway.

810
00:54:34,596 --> 00:54:39,307
But especially as an independently published author, what would be your kind of

811
00:54:39,337 --> 00:54:45,006
tips and advice about how you would, as an author, go about finding an agent in

812
00:54:45,066 --> 00:54:46,476
this route?

813
00:54:47,256 --> 00:54:50,346
Yeah. I guess I'll answer quickly, I'm conscious of time.

814
00:54:50,376 --> 00:54:53,646
But the easy one is when they're just massive on Amazon.

815
00:54:54,156 --> 00:54:56,436
Do you know, interestingly, I'll just say very quickly, that the

816
00:54:57,816 --> 00:55:01,777
third best-selling book released last week in Amazon US was AI, which is quite

817
00:55:01,777 --> 00:55:06,216
terrifying. And it's not budging. So that is interesting.

818
00:55:06,547 --> 00:55:09,786
And quite obviously AI, so people will know what they're getting.

819
00:55:10,446 --> 00:55:11,346
Anyway, KU

820
00:55:13,837 --> 00:55:16,206
charts, we'll monitor. So those are the really big ones.

821
00:55:16,236 --> 00:55:19,266
We'll be looking at those seven times a day, refreshing Amazon.

822
00:55:19,716 --> 00:55:23,226
And then everyone else is reaching out to us in the traditional way and pinpointing

823
00:55:23,256 --> 00:55:24,277
what you've been doing. And

824
00:55:26,016 --> 00:55:29,316
we take our submissions part incredibly seriously. Nothing gets overlooked.

825
00:55:29,466 --> 00:55:34,626
So if outlining some of the success come from self-publish or just even just

826
00:55:34,656 --> 00:55:38,766
beginning to build it and wanting some advice, or it seems like there's something

827
00:55:38,797 --> 00:55:41,286
that would cross into traditional really well, we would always look at that.

828
00:55:42,588 --> 00:55:46,668
Okay, thank you. And Meryl, coming to you about independently published authors.

829
00:55:47,118 --> 00:55:51,079
How best would they work with their local bookseller, their independent bookseller,

830
00:55:51,288 --> 00:55:52,878
as an independently published author?

831
00:55:52,878 --> 00:55:55,158
Because I know that can sometimes be quite tricky as well.

832
00:55:55,938 --> 00:55:58,758
They can be tricky because, I mean, you can imagine the number of books that

833
00:55:58,817 --> 00:56:01,699
are available to booksellers, and they're already struggling to triage.

834
00:56:01,848 --> 00:56:01,968
And

835
00:56:03,288 --> 00:56:07,878
it's a great point of pride that a bookshop owner or the staff there are curating

836
00:56:09,288 --> 00:56:12,888
the range to suit their own customers. So I think the key...

837
00:56:13,038 --> 00:56:16,878
We have a booklet that we worked on as Society of Authors on getting your book

838
00:56:16,968 --> 00:56:20,148
stocked in a high street bookshop, so that's still a pretty solid piece.

839
00:56:20,239 --> 00:56:24,858
I think it's on the SOA website. I think the key things are, just as we've said

840
00:56:24,918 --> 00:56:28,638
before, to be courteous, be kind, be a good human being.

841
00:56:29,298 --> 00:56:32,538
It would help if you're a customer of the shop already, or if you're a bookshop

842
00:56:32,598 --> 00:56:34,968
customer, and you can... So don't go in and

843
00:56:36,528 --> 00:56:40,459
necessarily talk about Amazon. If you're in the bookshop, talk about bookshops.

844
00:56:40,579 --> 00:56:40,878
And

845
00:56:42,258 --> 00:56:46,429
take some time to read the booklet and understand what the commercial models are

846
00:56:46,459 --> 00:56:49,038
and the commercial pressures are for the bookshop. They're incredibly busy.

847
00:56:49,429 --> 00:56:52,579
They're jacks of all trades. They have people coming in all the time, and they have

848
00:56:52,608 --> 00:56:57,168
requests all the time. So just take some time to find out how they need you to

849
00:56:57,228 --> 00:57:00,079
supply the books and how you would be paid for the books.

850
00:57:00,138 --> 00:57:00,228
And

851
00:57:02,478 --> 00:57:06,888
those things sound trivial, but they're important because that's the basis for your

852
00:57:06,918 --> 00:57:10,218
relationship. And I think if you want a commercial relationship with a bookseller,

853
00:57:10,278 --> 00:57:15,648
then talk to them, be respectful, and find out from them how best they would like

854
00:57:15,679 --> 00:57:16,338
to work with you.

855
00:57:18,618 --> 00:57:21,438
It's all about human relationships at the end of the day, isn't it?

856
00:57:21,468 --> 00:57:23,808
And having those human-to-human connections.

857
00:57:24,199 --> 00:57:27,888
We have time for one last question, which is going to be very brief, and I will ask

858
00:57:27,949 --> 00:57:33,588
it. Everybody on this call and in the audience will be aware of the AI charter that

859
00:57:33,648 --> 00:57:38,179
we've been working on with writers organizations around the world, so America,

860
00:57:38,358 --> 00:57:41,449
Canada, Australia, New Zealand. And

861
00:57:43,278 --> 00:57:47,298
in that spirit of collaboration, the question is, are you all willing to work, are

862
00:57:47,358 --> 00:57:50,748
you all supportive of the charter or working with us on the charter?

863
00:57:50,778 --> 00:57:55,188
So it's just an open question to the room about working on a set of

864
00:57:57,318 --> 00:58:00,949
other codes of conduct or commitments that we have as an industry.

865
00:58:01,338 --> 00:58:07,278
Is there space for a charter around AI use and how we might all be using it or

866
00:58:07,338 --> 00:58:08,748
not in our different ways?

867
00:58:14,838 --> 00:58:17,179
So, I'll come in on that. I mean,

868
00:58:18,558 --> 00:58:22,548
from a PA point of view, we're trying to solve the big question at the moment,

869
00:58:22,638 --> 00:58:26,898
which is enforcement of rights and content regulation.

870
00:58:27,768 --> 00:58:29,148
As a trade body, we

871
00:58:30,798 --> 00:58:36,588
haven't got into kind of dictating how either publishers or authors or anyone

872
00:58:37,188 --> 00:58:41,118
or members of the public will use AI.

873
00:58:41,298 --> 00:58:44,658
But we are very clear that we want it to be built right.

874
00:58:45,108 --> 00:58:49,278
We want the input to be right, which means respecting authors' rights, respecting

875
00:58:49,338 --> 00:58:51,798
copyright, which isn't happening at the moment.

876
00:58:52,368 --> 00:58:56,989
And then you have to have guardrails and transparency about how you use it.

877
00:58:57,408 --> 00:59:00,588
So from a personal point of view, I mean, and we talk about this all the time, but

878
00:59:00,679 --> 00:59:00,768
I

879
00:59:02,658 --> 00:59:05,808
really welcome the idea that we get around the table with you and with Hellie and

880
00:59:05,808 --> 00:59:07,068
with others, and we talk about

881
00:59:09,468 --> 00:59:13,728
how we can communicate what we think this should look like to the world.

882
00:59:14,538 --> 00:59:20,209
I am reticent to get into something which dictates how individual businesses or

883
00:59:20,268 --> 00:59:23,929
individual authors or individual companies will or won't choose to use it.

884
00:59:25,038 --> 00:59:28,938
But on those big kind of guardrail points, I think we're really clear, and I think

885
00:59:28,998 --> 00:59:30,348
we should all be clear together.

886
00:59:31,338 --> 00:59:37,158
Yeah. What he said. Okay. Yeah. I'm seeing nods, and we're at 12

887
00:59:37,188 --> 00:59:41,959
o'clock, so I'm going to bring this to a close, and we will be updating SoA members

888
00:59:42,079 --> 00:59:46,008
on ongoing conversations that we have with industry in this area.

889

00:59:47,118 --> 00:59:51,498

For now, I'm just going to say a massive thank you to Meryl, to Dan, and to Hellie

890

00:59:51,528 --> 00:59:54,468

for joining us this morning to have this big conversation.

891

00:59:54,498 --> 00:59:57,768

It's a fast-changing world, and there are lots of things to discuss, but thank you

892

00:59:57,798 --> 00:59:59,808

for sparing an hour with us this morning.

893

01:00:00,079 --> 01:00:03,288

Thank you also to Elsa Robert, who's been our moderator for today's event.

894

01:00:03,648 --> 01:00:07,788

Our next online event takes place tomorrow. It's a busy week with our pre...

895

01:00:08,239 --> 01:00:10,489

Sorry, Wednesday, with our pre-AGM member social.

896

01:00:11,358 --> 01:00:16,338

And head over to societyofauthors/events if you want to book into any of our events

897
01:00:16,368 --> 01:00:19,278
for the remainder of the year. We go on until the 3rd of December.

898
01:00:20,418 --> 01:00:23,268
And so the link is in the chat there for the SOA social.

899
01:00:23,329 --> 01:00:26,808
And of course, there's still time to register for the AGM, which takes place this

900
01:00:26,838 --> 01:00:29,598
Thursday from 5:00 till 7:00 p.m. online.

901
01:00:30,318 --> 01:00:34,398
Before we close, a final reminder that this and other events are all free to

902
01:00:34,489 --> 01:00:38,418
members and others. And so if you do have a spare few pounds, we do have an access

903
01:00:38,478 --> 01:00:41,989
fund, which we're currently fundraising for, and that just helps with small grants

904
01:00:42,048 --> 01:00:47,418
to those who need them to meet the costs to be a professional in this industry, to

905
01:00:47,449 --> 01:00:50,209
attend professional residencies, writing retreats, and events.

906
01:00:51,048 --> 01:00:53,688
And also don't forget bookshop.org. Christmas is coming.

907
01:00:54,618 --> 01:00:57,949
Think of it as your stocking filler with feel-good factor because you're giving

908
01:00:57,978 --> 01:01:02,688
back to your author community. And so with that said, a final thank you to Hellie,

909
01:01:02,778 --> 01:01:06,108
Meryl, and Dan, and all of you that have joined us for today's event.

910
01:01:06,408 --> 01:01:09,918
You can continue the conversation by tagging SoA on Blue Sky, Instagram, or

911
01:01:09,978 --> 01:01:14,868
Facebook, or talk about it at your next in-person author community event, because

912
01:01:14,959 --> 01:01:17,868
all the good things in life happen in real life.

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01:01:17,959 --> 01:01:20,959

So thank you for attending today, and have a good rest of your day.

914

01:01:22,489 --> 01:01:22,968

Thank you.