



COUNCIL OF LITERARY MAGAZINES AND PRESSES

Maximizing Your Relationship With Barnes & Noble: A CLMP Virtual Roundtable

The following represents a redacted transcript of the **CLMP Virtual Roundtable on "Maximizing Your Relationship with Barnes & Noble" - Moderated By B&N's Small Press and Vendor Relations Director, Marcella Ann Smith on October 14, 2004 at 2PM (EST)**), followed by several supporting documents to assist CLMP member publishers in the contacts with B&N.

MODERATOR

Marcella A. Smith (B&N)
Director Small Press & Vendor
Relations

PARTICIPATING PUBLISHERS

Jennifer Cande (Quick Fiction/JP Press)
Rusty Barnes (Night Train)
Beth Bosworth (The St. Ann's Review)
Daniel Bourne (Artful Dodge)
Nickole Brown & Sarah Gorham
(Sarabande Books)
Cynthia Brown (Tiferet)
Marie Carter (Hanging Loose Press)
Elaine Dallman (Woman Poet/Women-
in-Literature)
Sandra R. Garcia (QueerRamblings)
H. Palmer Hall (Pecan Grove Press)
Beth Harrison (Spinning Jenny)
Muriel Keyes (The Antioch Review)
Jordan Jones (Leaping Dog Press)
Brenda Keen (Georgia Review)
Samantha Ketay Marlowe (Swink)
Bill Pierce (AGNI)

Adam Pieroni (Quick Fiction/JP Press)
Josephine Posti (Paper Street)
Deborah Rush (Coteau Books)
Megan Saxelby (Other Voices)
Adam Travis (Poetry Magazine)

CLMP STAFF

Jeffrey Lependorf (CLMP)
Rob Casper (CLMP)
Thom Didato (CLMP)
Jamie Schwartz (CLMP)

NB: The following represents a redacted transcript of the live virtual roundtable discussion – extraneous conversation has been deleted, punctuation and spelling have been corrected, as well as flow between question and answer where the results of computer lag times may have led to responses following new questions.

Jeffrey Lependorf (CLMP): I am delighted to welcome all of you to this CLMP Virtual Roundtable, "Maximizing Your Relationship with Barnes & Noble."

Many of you already have a relationship with B&N; many of you would like to—we're very fortunate to have with us Marcella Smith, B&N's Director of Small Press and Vendor Relations. Marcella has kindly agreed to address your concerns, answer your questions, and work with us in maximizing your relationship with B&N to meet a common goal: selling your books.

Welcome, Marcella!

Marcella A Smith (B&N): Thanks very much. I'm glad to be here.

Brenda L Keen (Georgia Review): If possible, please address literary magazines, too, Marcella.

Marcella A Smith (B&N): I'm sorry I don't have much knowledge about the magazines, but I can give you a contact at B&N who may be helpful. Tricia Tyndorf, or Ttyndorf@bn.com or 212-633-3392. Tricia is in the magazine/news stand group and works with magazine publishers who have not done business with B&N before

Jeffrey Lependorf (CLMP): Marcella, what's the best way for someone to begin their relationship with B&N?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): If you've never done business with B&N before, the best way to start is by contacting my department, sending us a copy of your current title, the marketing plan, and your distribution connections whatever they are. We show the books to the buyers who make the distribution decisions and we get back to the publisher and get the relationship moving

Adam Travis (Poetry Magazine): Marcella, what do you mean by "marketing plan?"

Marcella A Smith (B&N): Marketing plan--what is the promotion or publicity for the title. How will the consumer know the book exists? Will there be reviews? If so, where? Will the author do readings? Will the book be excerpted in a magazine?

H. Palmer Hall (Pecan Grove Press): So, you would order directly from, say, Baker & Taylor? Can local B&Ns order direct from us?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): B&N would order from Baker & Taylor. We prefer the stores order from one of the wholesalers rather than from a publisher directly. It's more efficient for the stores and for the publisher in the long run.

Brenda L Keen (Georgia Review) : FYI - Athens' B&N orders through Ingram Periodicals.

Nickole Brown & Sarah Gorham (Sarabande Books): If a press is working with a distributor, is it still helpful for B&N to hear of marketing plans directly from the press?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): We rely on the distributor to convey all of the information from its publisher clients. So, as long as you get the information to them, they will get it to the correct buyer for the book.

Megan Saxelby (Other Voices): How does the relationship work between B&Ns and Ingram

Marcella A Smith (B&N): B&N uses Ingram in much the same way every bookseller uses a wholesaler to fill in quick selling titles, fill special orders, and in some cases be the vendor of record for a publisher.

Bill Pierce (AGNI): How much influence does your department have (in purchasing/stocking decisions) relative to the influence of individual buyers at the stores?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): All the buying is done centrally in the merchandise department here. We let the booksellers be booksellers and let the buyers do the buying.

Jeffrey Lependorf (CLMP): Marcella, how can people beef up their web presence on B&N online?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): If a publisher goes to the home page of the website and scrolls to the services section and clicks on the Publisher & Author guide, all the information you need is there to add reviews, an excerpt, author bio, etc.

Brenda L Keen (Georgia Review) : How much leeway do local bookstores have with in-store displays? Is layout determined by the corporate office?

Jordan Jones (Leaping Dog Press): Adding to Brenda's query: What programs do you have that support small press titles, say with endcap displays, etc.?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): The stores have a great deal of discretion about what gets displayed where. Most of the front tables and obviously the bestseller sections are directed from the merchandise department, but much of the displays you see are created by local stores.

All the featured promotions are determined by the buyers, so if a buyer is enthusiastic about a title, the buyer will work with the publisher on the instore promotion ideas.

H. Palmer Hall (Pecan Grove Press): What we are interested in is making it easy for B&N to purchase in the cities where our poets live or happen to be traveling, not so much national stocking of titles. Do those stores still have to order nationally?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): Regarding events with local authors, yes the books do need to be routed through the merchandise department. We need to make sure they are in the database properly and orderable from a vendor with whom B&N does business.

The local store may then order in what it needs for the event from the wholesaler or distributor.

Rusty Barnes (Night Train): It's true, however, that Ingram, the biggest vendor, won't carry presses with less than ten titles in print--can you suggest small-press/small distributor alternatives?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): We use the other national wholesalers Baker & Taylor, Partners, Koen, the distributors, as well as the local regional wholesalers like Booksource, Southern Book Service, Bookmarketing Plus, and Bryant Altman.

Jordan Jones (Leaping Dog Press): So, assuming one has a distributor with a relationship with B&N, Ingram, B&T, etc., getting books into a particular store for an event should not be a big deal, as the distributor has already gotten the titles into your system.

Marcella A Smith (B&N): Ingram, and Baker & Taylor are wholesalers, not distributors, and do not supply bibliographic or marketing information to B&N. We rely on the publisher to give us that information at all times.

Jeffrey Lependorf (CLMP): Does B&N have a relationship with Small Press Distribution (SPD)?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): Yes, B&N does have a relationship with SPD, so if a title is available through SPD, SPD will tell B&N about it.

H. Palmer Hall (Pecan Grove Press): But has Baker & Taylor already gotten the books into your distribution channels or do we still need to fill in the forms to be listed on BN.com?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): If Baker & Taylor is already making the book available to B&N, then you can skip the business relationship with bn.com, but still beef up the presence of your title there.

Jeffrey Lependorf (CLMP): What sorts of info tend to be missing from your perspective?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): The author's credentials, home town, education affiliation, publishing history, promotion plans.

Many times new publishers assume B&N knows about the book from B&T or Ingram or Bowker. We rely on the publisher to tell us about their books.

Nickole Brown & Sarah Gorham (Sarabande Books): If I have an author who is not necessarily reading in B&N but has an event nearby, who should I contact to order books for that store?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): You can talk with the store manager about ordering books.

Brenda L Keen (Georgia Review): If I were a book publisher, I'd want to know how to tell B&N about my books--send review copies to buyers? at what address? Where should I start?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): I thought you'd never ask: Marcella Smith, Barnes & Noble, Inc, 122 Fifth Avenue, NYC, NY 10011, 212-633-3454 fax 212-463-5677

Jordan Jones (Leaping Dog Press): But if you have a full-service distributor, such as IPG, SPD, Biblio, etc., they are already getting you up to speed about the new titles they are distributing, correct?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): Yes, Doug, you are correct.

I'm talking about publishers who do not have a full service distributor and are handling things on their own.

Daniel Bourne (Artful Dodge): Josh from Artful Dodge literary magazine here. We already have a relationship with B&N but would like to expand our distribution, particularly in Northeast Ohio. How might we do this? Or is this a question for Tricia?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): That is a question for Tricia.

Jeffrey Lependorf (CLMP): Marcella, since you've welcomed presses to send you things --- what specifically should they send (or *not* send) you?

Nickole Brown & Sarah Gorham (Sarabande Books): For instance, if we have truly big news about one of our books after the pub date, say a national prize or a set of incredible reviews, should we send that your way? Or should we rely on the distributors to do this?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): We like to see a copy of the finished book if we've never heard from a publisher before. We like to see the production standards. We like to get info about the author, and the marketing plans, reviews, etc. Also, if you have a full service distributor the sales rep from that firm will definitely let the buyer know about prizes, reviews, etc.

Megan Saxelby (Other Voices): If a book is being published through a university press and it is our first book, what kind of information would you want us to send?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): Probably the university press has a sales rep who calls on B&N, so the rep would present whatever information you have given them about the book to the buyer

Nickole Brown & Sarah Gorham (Sarabande Books): What is your relationship with JacketCaster?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): Sorry, I don't know much about JacketCaster...

Nickole Brown & Sarah Gorham (Sarabande Books): It is a program set up for publishers to submit all their book info to one place. From there, Jacket Caster sends info on to Amazon.com and all the other online booksellers, Borders, B&N, Powell's, etc. Except that I do remember having trouble with the B&N website through them.

Marcella A Smith (B&N): I do know that JacketCaster does supply publisher data and images to Barnes & Noble.com, as does Quality Solutions. Really, the folks at bn.com could answer that question better than I.

Jeffrey Lependorf (CLMP): Which B&N program(s) would you recommend as most effective for a small press with a limited marketing budget? Are there non-profit rates?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): If the buyer is enthusiastic and the publisher is willing, we work things out.

Jeffrey Lependorf (CLMP): Does anyone have any questions relating to book returns?

H. Palmer Hall (Pecan Grove Press): Do you expect presses to accept as returns books that have been signed or otherwise marred in the store? Or: Who swallows that? B&N or the small press?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): Good question. Yes, we expect autographed copies to be accepted for return. Normal bookstore wear and tear we also expect the publisher to accept. The publisher wants the book exposed to the public, it will get shelf worn. However, books with coffee stains, forklift damage, etc, should never have been returned to you in the first place and we make good on that for sure.

H. Palmer Hall (Pecan Grove Press): How long do you keep a slow-selling book in stock before returning it?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): It depends. More than likely we'd let it sell out and not reorder it rather than making a return. Returns are expensive in time and money, and booksellers don't like them any more than publishers do.

Jordan Jones (Leaping Dog Press): What is the current situation with community relations in your stores? Does each store typically have a person to contact for readings and events, or is this handled regionally?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): About 350 stores have Community Relations Managers (CRM). We narrowed it down to the stores where it made sense.

H. Palmer Hall (Pecan Grove Press): And there is the question of B&N benefits. Contact the CRM for that?

Marcella A Smith (B&N): B&N benefits?

H. Palmer Hall (Pecan Grove Press): I mean benefits for local presses. Like an event designed to assist local groups. We do have two (CRMs) here in San Antonio and they're extremely helpful.

Marcella A Smith (B&N): That's nice to hear! Yes, it is the CRM who you should be in contact with. A copy of B&N's CRM list, as well as some other helpful contact sheet and general information documents will be provided along with the transcript of this chat.

Jordan Jones (Leaping Dog Press): That would be helpful to have the list of stores with CRMs.

CLMPJeffrey : Well, Marcella, thank you for your time in this forum.

Marcella A Smith (B&N): Many thanks to all of you. Every year at BEA B&N hosts a Meet the B&N Buyers session. We'll make sure you all are invited to the next one in NYC in 2005.

CLMPJeffrey : Thank you, Marcella, and thanks to all of you for participating. Bye now!

THE END

(Transcript edited – 12/16/04)

Attached/Downloadable Supporting Documents:

- 1) [B&N's current CRM store list \(provided as an Excel doc\)](#)
- 2) [General contact information sheet -- handout has basic contact information for Barnes & Noble.com, Barnes & Noble College, and Barnes & Noble, Inc \(trade retail\).](#)
- 3) [B&N's recent announcement about the barcode and ISBN changes in the works for 2005 and beyond](#)
- 4) [Sample basic letter that goes out to magazine publishers from the B&N Newsstand group.](#)

ABOUT THE MODERATOR:

Marcella Ann Smith is Director, Small Press and Vendor Relations for Barnes & Noble, Inc. She got into the business over 30 years ago in Washington, DC, when she began working in an independent bookshop there. Since then she has worked in and managed two other bookstores, been a sales rep for St Martin's Press and a Marketing Manager at Simon & Schuster. She is a former member of the Board of Directors of the Publishers Marketing Association, and sits on the Small Press Center's Advisory Council.

She is a rabid baseball fan, and studies photography and Italian in her spare time.