S167. (12:10 pm to 1:25 pm)

Room 2103C, Kansas City Convention Center, Street Level; Saturday, February 10, 2023

WELCOME STATEMENTS:

Welcome to “From the First Idea to ‘It’s Finally Here!’: The Life Cycle of Publishing a Book.” Thank you all for being here. I’ll offer up some basic reminders, deliver some remarks, and then introduce the panelists.

A few reminders before we begin:

• For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let the moderator of the panel know—that’s me, Katie Cortese, and a printed copy will be delivered to you.
• Please make sure that spaces marked for wheelchairs remain clear of chairs or other barriers.
• Treat service animals as working animals and do not attempt to distract or pet them.
• Be aware of those with chemical sensitivities and refrain from wearing scented products.
• Please be aware that your fellow attendees may have invisible disabilities. Do not question anyone’s use of an accommodation while at the conference, including for chairs reserved for those with disabilities.

Opening Remarks:

For real-life writers who dream of publication, the process of taking a book from a file on a computer or a scrawl in a notebook to a published and promotable artifact can feel mysterious and daunting, if not impossible, and a study of bookmaking in the media offers little practical help. Whereas the real-life writer is concerned with artistry or poetics or truth-telling or narrative, the cinematic writer simply jots or types, usually depicted in a montage ordered this way:
Step one; acquire a vintage typewriter.
Step two; type stuff, periodically pulling sheets from the typewriter to ball up and toss toward an otherwise empty trashcan.
Step three; cut to an impressively thick and orderly manuscript emblazoned with an evocative title.

There, now was that so hard?

In movies, the drama often skips from that point to the book’s afterlife. It makes the author famous or infamous or an outcast or even an obscure genius underappreciated in their time, but it makes some kind of impact on the overarching plot, and we rarely see all the people along the way who shepherd the manuscript on its seemingly straightforward path from the author’s mind to the reader’s mind.

For our purposes today, we’re going to assume you are all real-life writers and/or bookmakers, some of whom aspire to be published authors, and others who already are, which unfortunately doesn’t guarantee that the path to additional publications is any more predictable. Because there are so many routes to publication and so many genres, types of presses, and authorial aspirations, there’s no way this panel can be 100% comprehensive in its efforts to demystify the process, but our hope is that the collective expertise of the panelists—each of whom is versed in a different publishing specialty—will shed some light on the murky middle between your spark of an idea and the brilliant blaze that you and everyone who feeds the flames along the way hope that spark may become.

The plan today is for me to briefly introduce the people sitting in front of you, and then for each of them to speak for a few minutes about each of their roles and responsibilities in the process of writing, representing, publishing, and promoting a book, as well as any other information they feel will be useful to our conversation. After everyone’s brief talk, I’ll throw out a few questions for
discussion among the panelists, and then we’ll open up the conversation with some questions from the audience.

So, in the order in which they are seated, our panelists are …

Sarah Viren: Sarah Viren is a contributing writer for the New York Times Magazine and author of two books of narrative nonfiction. Her essay collection Mine won the River Teeth Nonfiction Book Prize and the Great Lakes College Association New Writers Award, was a silver winner for essays in Foreword INDIES Book of the Year Awards, was longlisted for the Pen Diamonstein-Spielvogel Award for the Art of the Essay and was a finalist for a Lambda Literary Award (as well as being named one of LitHub’s favorite books of 2018). Her second book, To Name the Bigger Lie: A Memoir in Two Stories, is out on June 13 from Scribner. Sarah is a finalist for a National Magazine Award in Feature Writing and the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship as well as a Fulbright Student Grant to Colombia. She teaches in the creative writing program at Arizona State University and lives in Tempe with her partner, two kids, and rescue dog Oki.

Stephanie Hansen: Stephanie represents authors with their debut novels and New York Times-bestsellers and has brokered deals with small presses, mid-size publishers, every major publishing house, foreign publishers, audio producers, gaming app companies, reading app companies, and film producers. She holds a master’s degree with a Creative Writing Specialization. She represents everything fiction from children's to adult books. She's also seeking non-fiction projects with heart. Previously editorial for Mind’s Eye Literary Magazine and consulting with Hollywood book & film agent Michele Wallerstein, she joined Metamorphosis July 2016. Originally looking to help Midwest authors in "flyover states" to garner the attention of major publishing houses, she found camaraderie with multiple agents and editors. Covid has her missing coffees and lunches with publishers & major house editors and trips to NYC. Stephanie is unilaterally deaf with 90 dB
tinnitus and hearing loss as well as nerve damage on the other side. She's dedicated to elevating voices that often go unheard.

**Yuka Igarashi:** Yuka Igarashi is an executive editor at Graywolf Press, where she acquires fiction and nonfiction titles, both in English and in translation. Before joining Graywolf in 2021, she was editor-in-chief of Soft Skull Press, founder and editor-in-chief of *Catapult* magazine, founding editor of the *Best Debut Short Stories* anthology series, and the managing editor of *Granta* magazine. She is interested in short stories, essays, interdisciplinary work, and formal innovation. The writers whose books she has published include Hiromi Kawakami, Lucy Ives, Wayne Koestenbaum, Lynne Tillman, Dorthe Nors, James Hannaham, Yukiko Motoya, Aoko Matsuda, Chloe Caldwell, Sam Pink, and Chelsea Martin.

**Joanna Englert:** Joanna Englert is the senior marketing and publicity director at Sarabande Books, an internationally-distributed literary press based in Louisville, KY. As a publicist she has represented more than fifty writers, including PEN/Nabokov Award Winner Sandra Cisneros and NYT bestselling author Rosellen Brown, and she has secured reviews in outlets like *The New York Times, NPR, The Washington Post, O, The Oprah Magazine, Publishers Weekly, Booklist*, and more. Joanna studied at Bellarmine University, Exeter College at the University of Oxford, and the University of Louisville, where she earned her MA in English and also taught Rhetoric and Composition. Joanna is the 2024 recipient of the Emerging Artist Award from the Kentucky Arts Council, and a 2023 Artist in Residence of the Kentucky Foundation for Women. Her poems have been published or are forthcoming in *The Pinch, Neon Door, Miracle Monocle, Jabberwock Review*, and elsewhere, and her work has been performed by the professional dance company Louisville Ballet. Her chapbook, *Godsnack*, was a semi-finalist for the 2022 CutBank Chapbook Contest.

**Katie Cortese:** I’m the author of *Girl Power and Other Short-Short Stories* (ELJ Editions, 2015) and *Make Way for Her and Other Stories* (University Press of Kentucky, 2018). I teach in the creative writing
program at Texas Tech University where I also serve as the faculty
director for Texas Tech University Press and the series editor for the
Iron Horse Prize for a First Book of Collected Prose.

MODERATOR QUESTIONS:

We will plan to leave at least ten-fifteen minutes for questions. The
moderator will kick off the Q&A period by asking panelists at least
some of the following questions, after which she will open up the
session for questions from the audience and conversation between the
panelists.

1) For Sarah Viren: As our representative author, can you describe how
each of your books came about? How was the writing process similar or
different between them? How did you place them? What expectations
did you have for them and how were they met or missed? What are some
misconceptions about your role that you’d like to correct?

2) For Stephanie Hansen: As the owner of your own literary agency,
what makes you pass on a project or take a closer look? What’s your
general practice concerning developmental editing with clients’ work?
How involved are you with the projects your agents take on? How do
you find homes for the books you represent and have you ever had to
give up on doing so for a given book? Why, if so? What are some
misconceptions about your role that you’d like to correct?

3) For Yuka Igarashi: As an editor for a large independent press, how
closely do you work with agents? With authors? What makes to want to
publish and advocate for a book? What are the hallmarks of a great
working relationship? What challenges have you faced either with a
given book or in working with the book’s author, agent, or your fellow
editors? What are some misconceptions about your role that you’d like
to correct?
4) For Joanna Englert: As the senior marketing and publicity director for an independent press, what is a prioritized list of actions or activities for publicizing a book? Who or what people or entities do you work with to spread the word about different kinds of titles? How can and/or should authors help you in marketing and publicizing their books? What are some misconceptions about your role that you’d like to correct?

QUESTIONS WILL NOW BE TAKEN FROM THE AUDIENCE UNTIL THE TIME ALLOTTED FOR THE PANEL ELAPSES.