

# WiPlash



March 2006

## Publishing from a Buyer's Perspective

12 April 2006

The buyer is an essential link between publishers and readers. The role is a crucial one: finding suitable books and promoting them to booksellers and libraries. It is the buyer's responsibility to know the market, to spot new trends and to respond to readers' demands.

So what really happens in the process of book selection? What are the criteria that buyers use? What qualities should a book possess to attract the buyer's attention? Our speaker this month will talk about book selection from the buyer's perspective and give tips on the best ways to promote to booksellers and librarians.

Helen Westwood graduated from the University of Brighton with a 2:1 in Information Science in 2000 and has worked her way up very quickly at the University's Queenwood Library from Part-time Assistant Librarian to her current position of Information Advisor with a budget of £45,000 per year to buy books for the library. She was also the first ever Information Advisor to win a teaching award for her outstanding contribution to learning at the University in 2005.

Helen has always had a passion for literature and decided in February 2005 to open an independent bookshop in her hometown. Mellon's Books stocks new and second-hand titles and she is always on the look out for fun ways of promoting books.

So join us at Foyle's to find out what she has to say.

### Meeting details

Our AGM (members only) will take place at 6.30, finishing at 6.45

Time: 6.45pm for 7pm start  
Venue: The boardroom (3<sup>rd</sup> floor, off Music section),  
Foyle's, Charing Cross Road, London WC2  
Nearest tube: Tottenham Court Road  
Admission: Free to members; £3.00 to non-members

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**WiP's website:** [www.wipub.org.uk](http://www.wipub.org.uk)  
**WiP's email address:** [info@wipub.org.uk](mailto:info@wipub.org.uk)

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear members

We were delighted to have Lisa Regan at our March meeting to talk about working in online publishing. Lisa is an online editor with LexisNexis publishers (formerly Butterworth's) and has first-hand experience of this rapidly developing sector.

Among the topics discussed at the meeting were the online working practice, the growing popularity of online reference materials and the qualities necessary to work in online legal publishing. So please make sure you read our meeting report in this issue to find out more.

Our next meeting, on 12 April, should also be a lively and useful event, with a discussion on the role of the book buyer, led by an independent bookseller and a librarian with experience in both the private and the public sector.

We hope that those of you who visited the London Book Fair in March enjoyed meeting new people, making new contacts and maybe picking up some useful tips on finding employment in publishing. Women in Publishing had a stand at the Fair that received a fair amount of attention from visitors. They were offered the opportunity to take part in our raffle and the winner, to be announced in April, will receive a year's free membership.

Plans for our annual summer party are well under way and it should be a fun evening with plenty of time and opportunities for networking. If you have any ideas for themes, activities or other aspects of the party, do get in touch – we look forward to hearing from you!

Lydia Strong  
Susannah Westwood  
WiPlash Editors

## Committee vacancies

### **WiPlash editor**

We are still looking for a third person to make up the *WiPlash* editorial team. If you are trying to get into publishing, this is a great opportunity to get some useful experience on your CV. Please email [info@wipub.org.uk](mailto:info@wipub.org.uk) if you are interested in this role.

## Noticeboard

### **Free ads!**

All WiP members can place a small ad in *WiPlash* free of charge. Just send your copy to [info@wipub.org.uk](mailto:info@wipub.org.uk) by the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month for the following month's issue and you will reach 250 women in the publishing industry.

## Women in Publishing

WOMEN IN PUBLISHING was founded in 1979 to promote the status of women working in publishing and related trades.

Our aims include providing opportunities for sharing information and expertise, encouraging networking and mutual support, and offering practical training for career and personal development.

Our activities – organised and administered by a small committee volunteers – are open to all women interested in publishing, and WiP's members in the UK and abroad range from students managing directors. For more information, please email us: [info@wipub.org.uk](mailto:info@wipub.org.uk)

## Acknowledgements

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Contributors: we are waiting to hear about your ideas!

The views expressed in this newsletter are the writers' own and do not necessarily reflect those of Women in Publishing.

## MEETING REPORT

### Online Publishing

8 March 2005

Online publishing is a relatively new industry sector that grows at a frenetic pace. Subscription services mean that in many areas, such as law, finance, construction and many more the reference information can be easily obtained through the publishers' websites instead of hard copies. Does it mean that in the near future voluminous reference books we are all used to will not be needed anymore?

Therefore this month we were lucky to have as our speaker Lisa Reagan, online editor with one of the biggest online publishers, Butterworth LexisNexis. She works with law and accounting books that are used by lawyers, judges, students, and also such companies as Price Waterhouse Coopers. Lisa explained that her goal is to enhance the content of the book online, providing a wider variety of information, improved navigation and a quicker publication of sources.

#### **1. What the job of an online editor involves**

A team of online editors manages and develops a number of online services and works to provide timely content online. Lisa works on editing and administrative services, production content and deals with customers. The LexisNexis website is subscription-based and it includes journals and various reference material that deal with banking, crime, human rights, taxes, pensions and more. It is easy to click on a subject area on the website, and it will instantly bring up more information on the specific topic. Subscribers in the UK are able to access US or Australian content as well. The sources are being updated weekly, monthly or yearly. The files are supposed to be updated on time and the links tested for accuracy. They post updates to the online content on the notice boards for customers to learn of any important changes.

Other duties include searching through online government websites for relevant stories to place on the LexisNexis website and to assist with customer queries. On average, it takes about three days to get new content up online, except for the yearly updates, which take a little bit longer. Once everything is signed off, it is put online.

#### **2. How online editors work with content editors**

The content editors have the technical expertise and knowledge to put the files onto an internet server platform in draft form, and then it is an online editor's job to double-check that the content is correct. Outside links and hyperlinks are tested and static is checked. Online editors fill out a problem error sheet with any errors they find and after the information has been revised by the content editors, it goes back to online editors for the final check.

#### **3. Why online publishing is particularly important for LexisNexis**

LexisNexis is investing a lot of money in online publishing at the moment because it particularly suits their products. For example, if readers want specific information it is far quicker to search online than to find the most recent hard copy.

#### **4. Online and traditional publishing**

There is still a big demand for hard copies, and so far it has not been affected by the launch of the new website.

#### **5. Conclusion**

After this very informative talk on online publishing, Lisa answered a range of questions from the floor – for example, whether it is vital to have a law degree to work with publishing legal materials online (it is not) and whether she faces a lot of challenges in her job. In answer to that she said that she is most proud of having first worked on the new launch of the main website and that it is a challenge to meet very tight deadlines.

In order to find out more information about online publishing at Butterworth's LexisNexis, please visit <http://www.butterworths.com>

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## INTERVIEW

### Julia Stonehouse, author of *Idols to Incubators – Reproduction theory through the ages*

***Idols to Incubators* is a comprehensive and thought-provoking guide to reproduction theory through the ages, which draws on evidence from a variety of cultures.**

*Wiplash* spoke to the author, Julia Stonehouse, to find out more about the background to the book and her plans for the future.

#### **What inspired you to write the book?**

Around 25 years ago I was sitting in the 'French' pub in Soho with a group of men and women - all intelligent literary types. We started discussing the inequality between men and women. It was a heated debate. Then one man said "so why has there never been a female Bach or Beethoven then?" Everyone went silent. The women spluttered a few words but came to a grinding halt. The men smirked, then laughed, triumphant. It was over. The men had won.

I went home that night and couldn't sleep.

The next morning I determined to find the answer to that question. I started reading or re-reading all the feminist theory I could lay my hands on. I realised that they were catalogues of disaster, rather than helpful theories. I wrote out the theories. There were 17. The problem with them was that while one theory held out in some social/temporal/geographical circumstances, they fell apart in others. And of course they all contradicted each other, and could all be pulled apart. I headed for the British Library and spent years looking for clues.

#### **When did the breakthrough come in your research?**

I came across the first helpful information in the field of anthropology. Where they thought men were not involved in reproduction, women had higher status.

And a lot more sexual freedom because, of course, as men were not fathers of children, it mattered not one hoot who the women had sex with.

One of these places was the Trobriand Islands in the Solomon Sea, South West Pacific Ocean. The anthropologist who wrote about these people around 1914-18, Malinowski, had written several books, including *The Sexual Life of Savages*. There were plenty of critics who refused to believe his conclusions so I decided to go and see for myself. (See Chapter 15) The Trobriands are a small group of islands. There was one shop selling cigarettes, cooking oil, and not much else; certainly no tourist postcards. I talked to as many people as I could, and came away convinced Malinowski was not making it up.

#### **How did your research go on from there?**

Then the question was: when were the facts of life discovered? I searched through lists of "important discoveries" - not one mention. Buckminster Fuller could date the invention of the carpet sweeper, but not when the facts of life were discovered. I already knew at this point that the (later) ancient Greeks, and almost everyone on record since, thought men planted the seed in the female field. But where it changed over - a complete silence had fallen over the subject. By now I was roaming all the science libraries. Eventually I came across the hero of the day - Karl Ernst von Baer.

The facts of human were discovered over a period of 133 years (small incremental steps of information) from 1827 to 1960.

#### **Once the facts of life had been discovered how did this affect the role of women?**

If one has to decide a date at which women were accepted as generants (mothers), then it would probably be 1900, the turn of the 20th century. All this is in the historical record that even today is hidden away on the top shelves of obscure medical libraries.

**If that was the end of the man seed, woman incubator theory, when did it begin?**

Not earlier than 3000BC. Before then, at least in the traditionally-called 'cradle of civilisation' areas, they thought the seed was in the woman and men were required to 'water' it – like a perennial seed requires water. Even earlier, during the Paleolithic, they probably had a theory that closely resembles that of the Trobriand Islands today (the parthenogenetic woman). The idea that there was but one seed – male – is that which, like mortar, held the towers of patriarchy in place. The theory made patriarchy inevitable, as I outline in the book.

This subject is absolutely huge – it spans all history and all cultures. Basically, it is this: what do you tell a small child who asks where they come from? It is a question every child asks; yet the answer given has mostly been wrong. I consider it 'the great mistake'. This is no minor incidental of history, yet it remains absent from the history books. In its absence, people think there must have been a logical reason for women's historical inferiority, some wonderful 'tradition' we should respect or even revere.

**Did you ever find the answer to the question "so why has there never been a female Bach or Beethoven then?"?**

I did find the answer. Women were not thought biologically creative; it was against their 'nature' as defined by God.

To go against this accepted reality was to be a dangerous radical - an intellectual transvestite going against the 'nature' of reality, bound to bring shame on you and The idea of two seeds and fusion was totally incomprehensible - a concept so alien from people's lives that they couldn't conceptualise such a thing. It wasn't always like that. In the sixth century BC Pythagoras was taught by a woman, but in 1900 AD most women were forbidden to learn Pythagorean theory.

For thousands of years women were barred from such intellectual activity. They were defined as non-creative 'matter', - essential biological (and domestic) helpmates to the creative, sentient beings, men.'

**The book was published in 1994. What have you been doing since?**

I ghost write, and write under other names. I have also lectured on this subject. Over the years since publication, my theory has been strengthened with new information. I am at present re-writing the material in *Idols to Incubators* in a accessible format. My working title is *Why Men Don't Clean Toilets*. I'm looking for a publisher, and anyone interested could contact me on this email address.

If you would like to find out more about the book please e-mail Julia Stonehouse directly at [juliastnhs@aol.com](mailto:juliastnhs@aol.com). The book is published by Scarlet Press and is available from [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) and [www.abebooks.co.uk](http://www.abebooks.co.uk).

## REVIEW

### ***Labyrinth* by Kate Mosse**

On 5 March 2006 Amanda Ross, creator of the Richard & Judy Book Club, was declared the 'most influential person in the world of books' by the Observer. Whether or not you agree with this accolade it certainly demonstrates the weight that the Richard & Judy Book Club now carries in the industry. The winner of the first award, *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold, went on to sell a million copies, as did *Star of the Sea* by Joseph O'Connor. This year's winner, *Labyrinth* by Kate Mosse, has already sold more than 750,000 copies and is set to sell many more.

*Labyrinth* cleverly weaves together the story of Alice in modern day Languedoc with the character Alaïs in thirteenth century Carcassona as both fight to protect the secret of the Holy Grail. The narrative is gripping and fast-paced throughout and Mosse's prose flows easily between the two time periods. The plotting is brilliant and the characters mostly believable, although if there is one weakness it is the 'baddies' who are slightly unconvincing in the modern tale. However, this is a minor complaint and certainly doesn't detract from the charm of the novel as a whole.

Where this novel really stands out from the crowd is in precision of historical detail and the vivid descriptions of the South of France, both thirteenth century and modern day. This is certainly one of those novels that make you want to jump on a plane and explore the area yourself.

The book has been criticised by some for its length, however, if it had been any shorter, it would have lacked in detail and become superficial. Besides, the 525 pages are divided into 82 relatively short chapters so it's easy to read it in short bursts if you are pressed for time. The use of French and Occitan throughout with accompanying translations could be frustrating, as some have claimed, but I find that it lends more authenticity to the text.

The book has been compared by many with Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* and such comparisons are inevitable as they are both concerned with the Holy Grail. However, the narrative of *Labyrinth* is more complex than that of *The Da Vinci Code* and personally I found it more convincing.

Overall, *Labyrinth* is a superbly written, captivating read and I'm grateful to Amanda Ross for bringing it to my attention.

For writing tips, to download reading group questions on the novel or to learn more about the writing process behind the book visit [www.mosselabyrinth.co.uk](http://www.mosselabyrinth.co.uk)

**Susie Westwood**  
**Editor, WiPlash**

*Labyrinth*, Kate Mosse, Orion,  
£9.99, 527pp