

**The Glue that Connects Publishers to Booksellers:
An analysis of the role of commissioned sales representatives and their value as links
between book publishers and booksellers**

by
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ABSTRACT

This project report covers three key areas: the history of the company Ampersand Inc., the role of sales representatives in the publishing industry, and what both publishers and booksellers need to know in order to garner higher sales for their books. Through an analysis of a commissioned sales rep agency, Ampersand Inc., the report will look at how the publishing industry has changed in the past six years, and how these changes have affected sales strategies. The report will also show how having the right sales force is vital to a book's success and that commissioned sales reps have a huge wealth of knowledge in the book publishing industry that publishers and booksellers should be taking fuller advantage of.

Keywords: sales representation; book publishing; booksellers

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

The process of publishing a book involves many steps. The book can take months or years to put together from its initial acquisition, through stages of editing and design, until it is produced in its final form as a physical bound book, and an e-book. Once production is finished, the book moves into the next stage of the publishing process — sales and marketing

Sales representatives are key members in the publishing process. A publisher's sales representative presents and sells its books to a retailer. They are responsible, along with the publisher, for putting the book into the market for sale. Due to the large number of retail outlets selling books, publishers count on sales representatives to forge the individual relationships with each store. At a seminar hosted by the ABPBC (The Association of Book Publishers of BC), retired sales rep and past President of Ampersand Kate Walker explained, “We work with everyone in the publishing company, connecting book publishers to their customers, and customers with book publishers. Our goal is to get the books publishers to acquire the right customers in the perfect markets.”¹

Sales reps act as a link between the publisher and the bookseller, and can target specific retailers to maximize sales for any given book. Usually paid through some form of commission, sales reps need to know the publisher's list and the retailer's customer, and encourages book sales by placing books where they are most likely to succeed. Walker describes sales reps as “adaptable chameleons” with the work they do changing regularly based on the needs of the book, publisher, and market.²

Types of Sales Representation

There are various types of sales representation a publisher can have. Thomas Woll in *Publishing for Profit* lists 6 key ways.³

¹ Kate Walker, “How to work with sales reps” (seminar, Marketing and Promotional Strategies for Canadian Publishing, Vancouver, BC, September 11, 2014).

² Ibid.

³ Thomas Woll, *Publishing for Profit 5th Edition* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2015), 186.

1: In-House

In-house sales representation involves having a sales team dedicated to selling the publisher's books to accounts. Though effective, this strategy is the most costly, and Woll estimates it will only pay for itself if the publisher is making over 10 million dollars in sales a year.⁴ His estimate assumes a publisher pays their reps an average salary of \$40,000 with a 7.5% commission, plus 25% in benefits, a car allowance of \$200 a month, plus travel and entertainment expenses.⁵ In addition to this is the fact that a publisher needs more than one rep to cover maximum territory, with Woll suggesting at least three to four:

“The number of reps it takes to cover the entire country adequately has declined considerably as the number of independents has declined. It has also gone down as the proportion of books sold to the major Internet retailers has increased. But you still need a minimum of three to four reps to sell properly.”⁶

While not cost effective for most publishers, this is the sales strategy chosen by multi-national publishing giants like Penguin Random House, and Simon and Schuster.

2: In-House, Outside Fulfilment

Woll's second strategy involves using in-house reps, but using an outside fulfilment facility. In this strategy the contacts remain within the publishing house, but another company is responsible for warehouse maintenance and accounts receivable collection.⁷ Harper Collins Canada is an example of this type of sales strategy. While they employ in-house sales representatives, they use RR Donnelley for their warehousing and distribution.⁸

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Woll, *Publishing for Profit*, 187.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ali Hewitt, personal communication with Paulina Dabrowski, December 7, 2015.

3: Commissioned Sales Reps

Commissioned sales reps are reps who do not work uniquely for one publisher, rather they sell multiple publishers' lists and receive a commission of the sale. The publisher does not pay the rep's salary, and doesn't need to cover travel or benefits. There are two types of commissioned sales representatives. They can either work independently as freelance reps, or work for an agency. Ampersand Inc. is an example of a sales rep agency; rather than hiring freelance reps, publishers hire the company Ampersand. Ampersand employs their sales reps, who receive a salary and commission bonuses. In addition, Ampersand also covers the travel and benefit costs. As of January 1st 2016, 33 publishers use Ampersand Inc. this way, including both Canadian publishers (e.g. Harbour, Owlkids, and Arsenal Pulp Press) and American publishers who hire Ampersand to represent them in Canada (e.g. Chronicle and Macmillan). Woll estimates that sales rep make around 5% from wholesale sales, and 10% from retail sales, though Ampersand acknowledges that these numbers can vary depending on the individual contract they have with each publisher.^{9,10}

4: Distributor

Using a distributor can be a great option for many mid-size to large publishers. Distributors warehouse, sell, and fulfill orders for multiple publishers. Raincoast Books is a distributor that uses Ampersand for Western Canada and Hornblower for Eastern Canada as their sales representation. As of January 1st 2016 there are 21 publishers and 2 gift lines that Ampersand represents for Raincoast Books. In addition to the services listed above they also offer marketing and promotional help for their clients. Using a distributor allows the publisher to concentrate on editorial and production, however it can create a disconnect between the publisher and their end customer.

5: Wholesale/Internet Retailer

This strategy can be done alone or combined with strategies above, and is becoming more prevalent as the digital age progresses. In this case, the publisher sells

⁹ Woll, *Publishing for Profit*, 188.

¹⁰ Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015.

their books to a major wholesaler or key internet retailer which then acts as a distributor.¹¹ Amazon is a major player here, and can fulfill orders to customers.

6: Strictly Online

This method is favorable to small, independent publishers. It involves strictly selling through online channels, whether through the publisher's own website or a major retailer like Amazon. Little overhead is required, but, Woll warns that many publishers overvalue the quantity they will be able to sell through this medium alone.¹²

Often publishers will use a combination of sales representation tailored to their specific needs making the sales strategy of each publisher different. There is no perfect combination, and it's important for publishers to consider not only their goals as a publishing house, but also the sales goal for each individual book on their list. The splitting of book sales is usually determined by where the best working relationship exists. Publishers may choose to sell to certain retailers themselves if they are local, if they are a large store such as Costco or Indigo, or if they have someone on staff who has experience selling to a specific market, such as libraries and schools.¹³

In-House Versus Outside Reps

There are strengths and limitations both for in-house reps and outside reps (both freelance or through an agency). In-house representation allows reps to focus solely on one publisher's list, meaning they are more intimate with the books they sell, and can encourage the sale of all their titles rather than trying to balance evenly between multiple publishers. They are however more expensive to have on staff than commissioned sales reps, and it is more difficult for them to cover the same territory that a commissioned sales rep agency can cover.

Commissioned sales rep have the difficult task of representing many publishers, however, due to the larger number of books they represent, it is easier for them to tailor

¹¹ Woll, *Publishing for Profit*, 190.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Dani Farmer, personal communication with Paulina Dabrowski, November 3, 2015.

custom lists for stores based on their customer buying habits. They also offer more valuable feedback to publishers, as they have such diverse experience with the wide range of books they've represented from a large and varied group of publishers.¹⁴

Case Study: Ampersand Inc.

This report will explore sales representation in the Canadian publishing industry by showcasing the business practises of the company Ampersand Inc. My observations, suggestions, and findings are compiled from my experiences working for Ampersand Inc., and my conversations with Ampersand Inc. employees: Cheryl Fraser, Ali Hewitt, Dani Farmer, Dot Middlemass, Saffron Beckwith, Scott Fraser, Vanessa Di Gregorio, Jenny Enriquez, Tamara Mair, and Mark Penney, as well as with Canadian Manda Group Sales Representative Iolanda Millar. I began an internship at Ampersand Inc. in May 2015 that ended in August 2015. I worked from the Richmond office, but visited the Toronto office in June 2015.

In my internship I listened in on virtual Fall 2015 sales conferences, and attended Ampersand's Spring 2016 sales conference at their head office in Richmond. I assisted reps in the Fall 2015 catalogue mailing, and helped maintain Ampersand's social media presence. I was responsible for reorganizing the Richmond showroom by creating displays, keeping featured items current, and pulling out of print or special order books. In the backroom I organized ARCs that Ampersand receives by publisher and by release date. I assisted in creating PowerPoint presentations for reps to use in their buying appointments, and helped create Saffron Beckwith's Fall 2015 Adult and Kids Lists for Dewey Divas and Dudes. Using this experience, I will provide suggestions for Canadian publishers and booksellers to increase book sales.

¹⁴ Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015.

PART 2: AMPERSAND INC

Ampersand Inc., formally known as Kate Walker & Company, is a sales representation agency specializing in book and gift markets. They currently represent 54 publishers and 10 gift lines from Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. They sell to bookstores, gift stores, wholesalers, and libraries across Canada.¹⁵

History of Ampersand Inc.

In its history Ampersand has overlapped with several other local firms including Douglas & MacIntyre (D&M) and Raincoast Books Distribution. The firm was founded in British Columbia in 1957 as Douglas Agencies by Jim Douglas, and in the 1970's Scott McIntyre and Mark Stanton joined the company. In 1970 Douglas and McIntyre would partner to create a publishing company which would become Douglas & McIntyre (D&M).¹⁶ In 1972 McIntyre and Stanton purchased Douglas Agencies and renamed it McIntyre & Stanton.¹⁷ Allan MacDougall was hired in 1976, and in 1977 McIntyre left to focus on D&M. The company was renamed Stanton & MacDougall in 1977, and Kate Walker was hired in 1978.¹⁸

In 1979 Mark Stanton and Allan MacDougall established a warehouse depot called BookExpress and a distribution company called Raincoast Books Distribution.¹⁹ Stanton and MacDougall had plans to start a publishing division of Raincoast Books Distribution, and sold Stanton & MacDougall to Kate Walker in January of 1992 to avoid conflict of interest.²⁰ In 1994 Kate Walker renamed Stanton & MacDougall as Kate Walker & Company.

Kate Walker expanded the company's reach and employed more reps across the country. Her first hire was Dot Middlemass, who stayed with the company until her retirement in 2015. Saffron Beckwith was hired in 1994 to work from Toronto and in

¹⁵ "Lines & Catalogues" Ampersand Inc., October 10, 2015, <http://ampersandinc.ca/lines>.

¹⁶ "History" Douglas & McIntyre, February 15, 2016, <http://www.douglas-mcintyre.com/history>

¹⁷ Leslie Bootle, "Publishers' Representatives: An Analysis of an Independent Commissioned Rep Agency in the Canadian Trade Book Industry" (Simon Fraser University, 2009), 6.

¹⁸ Bootle, "Publishers' Representatives", 6-7.

¹⁹ "About" Raincoast Books, February 15, 2016, <http://www.raincoast.com/about/>.

²⁰ Bootle, "Publishers' Representatives", 7.

1999 was the Eastern Sales Manager. In 2000 Kate Walker & Company established a gift division and was able to service 1,500 nontraditional accounts. In 2007 Walker sold part of the company to Beckwith and they became co-owners. In 2011 the company was renamed to its current name, Ampersand Inc. The name was chosen carefully to reflect their goal and mission. The company website states: “The name ‘Ampersand’ was chosen for a number of reasons: the ‘&’ icon has been in most of the company’s previous names; the ampersand is a connector, and that is what we do – connect our clients with their retail and library partners; and it just looks great!”²¹ When the company changed their name, they also changed their titles. Ampersand now refers to their reps as “Account Managers” as they felt the title better described what they do.²²

Kate Walker retired in 2013, and the new president of Ampersand Inc. became Saffron Beckwith, with Cheryl Fraser as vice-president. There are two main offices, a head office is in Richmond, British Columbia, and a second office in Toronto, Ontario.

²¹ “About Us” Ampersand Inc., October 10, 2015, <http://ampersandinc.ca/about-us>.

²² Cheryl Fraser, email message to Paulina Dabrowski, March 19, 2016.

Table 1: Timeline of Ampersand Inc.^{23,24,25}

- 1957** Jim Douglas starts company Douglas Agencies, representing McClelland & Stewart, Macmillan, and University of Toronto press
- 1970** Jim Douglas starts publishing company J.J. Douglas and partners with Scott McIntyre
- 1972** Douglas Agencies is purchased by Scott McIntyre and Mark Stanton. The company is renamed McIntyre & Stanton
- 1976** Allan MacDougall is hired
- 1977** Scott McIntyre leaves to focus on publishing company “J.J. Douglas”. Company is renamed “Stanton & MacDougall”
- 1978** J.J. Douglas is renamed “Douglas & McIntyre” (D&M). Kate Walker joins Stanton & MacDougall
- 1979** Stanton and MacDougall start a warehouse depot, Book Express, as well as launch a distribution company, Raincoast Books Distribution
- 1991** Kate Walker buys Stanton & MacDougall
- 1994** Walker renames the sales agency “Kate Walker & Company”
- 1995** Raincoast Books Distribution begin a publishing division called Raincoast Publishing
- 2000** Gift division of Kate Walker & Company is established and services over 1,500 nontraditional accounts
- 2008** Saffron Beckwith becomes co-owner of Kate Walker & Company
- 2009** Kate Walker & Company reaches 31 Canadian publisher clients
- 2011** Kate Walker & Company changes their name to Ampersand Inc.
- 2013** Kate Walker retires, Saffron Beckwith becomes president, and Cheryl Fraser becomes vice-president of Ampersand Inc.
- 2015** Ampersand Inc. continues to grow adding stationary client Libretto Group, clothing and gift line Arborist, and children’s book publisher Annick Press. Ampersand represents 54 publishers, and 10 gift lines.

²³ “Milestones” Ampersand Inc., October 10, 2015, <http://ampersandinc.ca/about-us/milestones>.

²⁴ Bootle, “Publishers’ Representatives”, 6-7.

²⁵ “About” Raincoast Books, February 15, 2016, <http://www.raincoast.com/about/>.

List of Current Reps

Ampersand sales representatives work remotely, or from the Richmond or Toronto office. In addition to being responsible for their appropriate territory, some reps also present to large retail buyers like Costco and Indigo, and also to library wholesalers like ULS. Reps travel frequently to conferences, book fairs, and to visit their accounts.

Cheryl Fraser, the vice-president works in the Richmond office with account managers Dani Farmer, Ali Hewitt, and Mark Penney. They are responsible for British Columbia, Alberta, Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Atlantic Provinces.

Saffron Beckwith, president, works from the Toronto office with account managers Karen Beattie, Scott Fraser, Jenny Enriquez, Vanessa Di Gregorio and Ryan Muscat representing Ontario, Nunavut, and Quebec. Also in Toronto is Ampersand's operations manager, Tamara Mair, who supports all the sales reps nationally.

Lorna MacDonald and Judy Parker work remotely. Lorna MacDonald represents Ampersand in Vancouver Island, and Judy Parker represents Ampersand in Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan.

Publishers and Gift Lines

Ampersand Inc. currently represents 54 publishers, and 10 gift lines in Canada.²⁶ They represent several Canadian publishers and gift lines like Goose Lane Editions and House of Anansi Press. They also represent British publishers like Jessica Kingsley and American publishers including Artbook/D.A.P. and Peter Pauper Press. Their ability to sell both book and gift is a huge benefit to their publishers and gift companies, as it allows them to explore new markets and retail outlets, and increase visibility and sales for their lines.

Publishers

Ampersand Inc. represents publishers that stretch across all genres of fiction and non-fiction. They have children's book publishers like Annick Press and Owlkids, publishers who specialize in environmental texts like Harbour, and publishers who publish books with strong ties to cultural and gender studies like Arsenal Pulp Press. They have several art publishers including Artbook/D.A.P. and Royal Ontario Museum, and represent nine university publishers including UBC Press and University of Toronto Press. Through their representation of Raincoast publishers they also have travel books from Lonely Planet, self-help and inspirational texts from publishers like Hay House, and graphic novels from Drawn & Quarterly. Many of their publishers publish cookbooks, board books, and literary fiction. Ampersand specializes in not only selling multiple publishers, but also multiple genres. On their website they share: "We are determined to give you the best in books & gift. Our collections are sure to be the perfect choices for all areas of life. From Made in Canada to award winning to eco-friendly, and everything in between, you're sure to find something for everyone."²⁷

Gift Lines

Ampersand represents multiple gift lines which carry journals, stationary, bookmarks, plush toys, calendars, and clothing. Peter Pauper Press and Michael Roger Inc. are both companies which specialize in paper goods. Michael Roger Inc. also

²⁶ "Lines & Catalogues" Ampersand Inc., October 10, 2015, <http://ampersandinc.ca/lines>.

²⁷ Ibid.

produces tote bags, while Peter Pauper has added book lights, cupcake kits, playing cards, and photo albums to their line. Polestar Calendars and Sellers Calendars are companies which produce calendars, and Magnetic Poetry is a line of tiny word magnets. MerryMakers creates plush toys based on well-known children's book characters. In 2015 their catalogue included a *Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site* toy, *Scaredy Squirrel* puppet, and an *Olivia* backpack.

In 2015 Ampersand welcomed two new gift lines to their list, Libretto Group and Arborist. Libretto produces high-quality journals, phone cases, paperweights, and pens. Arborist is a line taking Ampersand into a new direction; they produce onesies, hats, socks, bags, and pennants with Canadian insignia. While Arborist is the only line they currently carry which has no direct relation to the book market, it is still a great fit for Ampersand. Cheryl Fraser believes that the strong Canadian themes in the clothing match well with the strong Canadian themes in many books they represent.²⁸ Getting into the clothing business also introduces Ampersand's book publishers to an entirely new market.

Some of Ampersand's book publishers also produce gift items, like Chronicle Books, which produces journals, stickers, colouring books, and cards. They also have gift lines which produce books like Peter Pauper Press which regularly produces beautiful children's picture books. All of their publishers and gift lines are carefully chosen and Ampersand makes sure their lines reflect the company mission statement, which is to "provide all of our stakeholders with the most comprehensive and unsurpassed service in our industry."²⁹

²⁸ Cheryl Fraser, personal communication with Paulina Dabrowski, July 20, 2015.

²⁹ "About Us" Ampersand Inc., February 16, 2016, <http://ampersandinc.ca/about-us>.

Table 2: List of Publishers as of January 1st 2016 ³⁰

PUBLISHER/SUPPLIER	IMPRINTS OR DISTRIBUTED PUBLISHERS (ALSO REPRESENTED BY AMPERSAND)
Annick Press	
Arborist by the Drake General Store*	
Arsenal Pulp Press	
Artbook/D.A.P.	
Biblioasis	
Canadian Museum of History/ Canadian War Museum	
DK (Dorling Kindersley) Publishing	Alpha Books Rough Guides
Douglas & MacIntyre (D&M)	
Dundurn Press	
Formac/Lorimer Publishing	
Freehand Books	
Garfinkel Publications	
Goose Lane Editions	
Harbour Publishing	
House of Anansi Press	Groundwood Books
Libretto Group*	
McGill-Queen's University Press	
Michael Roger Inc.*	
New Society Publishers	
Orca Book Publishers	
OwlKids	
Peter Pauper Press*	
Polestar Calendars*	
Royal Ontario Museum	
Second Story Press	Azrieli Book Publishing Company Desputeaux & Aubin Sellers Calendars* Sellers Cards*
Sellers Publishing Inc.	
Thistledown Press	
University of Alberta Press	
UBC Press	Athabasca University Press Island Press Jessica Kingsley University of Washington Press
University of California Press	
University of Manitoba Press	
University of Ottawa Press	
University of Regina Press	
University of Toronto Press	
University Press of New England	

³⁰ "Lines & Catalogues" Ampersand Inc., January 5, 2016, <http://ampersandinc.ca/lines>.

Wendy Tancock*
Wilfrid Laurier University Press
Word-Of-Mouth Production

RAINCOAST PUBLISHERS/SUPPLIERS

Berrett-Koehler
Bilingual
Chronicle Books
Creative Company

Creative Editions
Creative Paperbacks

Drawn & Quarterly
Familius
Figure 1 Publishing
Gibbs Smith
Hay House
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
Laurence King
Lonely Planet
Macmillan

Entangled
Farrar, Straus & Giroux
Feiwel & Friends
First Second
Flatiron Books
Guinness World Records
Henry Holt
Kingfisher
Media Lab Books
Minotaur
Palgrave
Papercutz
Picador
Priddy Books
Roaring Brook
Rodale
Seven Seas
St. Martin's Griffin
St. Martin's Press
Square Fish
Tor/Forge

Magnetic Poetry*
MerryMakers*
Mountaineers
New Harbinger
Portable Press
Princeton Architectural Press
Prufrock Press
Quadrille Publishing
Silver Dolphin
Sourcebooks
Thunder Bay Press

* *Represents a gift line*

The Clients

Sales reps sell to four main clients on behalf of publishers: libraries, wholesalers, traditional retail stores, and non-traditional retail stores. Sales reps set up buying appointments with these clients either in their offices, over the phone, or at presentations set up with multiple buyers.

Libraries

Public libraries are a very important market, and Ampersand has always seen value in presenting to librarians. Previous owner of Ampersand Kate Walker was “passionate about libraries”, and her efforts to include libraries as an important client has remained since her retirement.³¹ Bootle explains (in her report) that the financial value of selling to libraries is that some library systems buy multiple copies of titles due to expected popularity, and that library sales do not garner returns.³²

Libraries buy books in a variety of ways. Some librarians buy for their own library, while others have one person responsible for buying for multiple branches. Many libraries also purchase from wholesalers due to provincial laws that restricts who they can purchase from.³³ In the latter case, Ampersand makes presentations to librarians in order to increase demand to the wholesaler, who will then purchase the books.

When selling to libraries, Ali Hewitt says “librarians are very aware of the patrons who frequent their locations and are always looking to find the type of stories those patrons are interested in. They have a huge interest in books that reflect the diversity of “the Canadian populations” and tell those stories. They are also very aware that people come to the library for information and to learn new skills.”³⁴

Ampersand’s President, Saffron Beckwith, is also a member of Dewey Divas and Dudes. This special team of sales reps presents to library systems in order to inform them about “hidden gems” on publishers’ lists.³⁵ The Dewey Divas and Dudes were founded in 2002 out of a program started at the Toronto library where 65-100 librarians from Ontario

³¹ Bootle, “Publishers’ Representatives”, 45.

³² Ibid, 43-44.

³³ Farmer, personal communication, November 3, 2015.

³⁴ Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015.

³⁵ “Who We Are,” *Dewey Divas and Dudes*. <http://deweydivas.blogspot.ca/p/bios.html>.

would gather to hear presentations from a variety of publishers at once.³⁶ They also have a website with links to their fall and spring adult and children's book lists.

The group has since done presentations from Vancouver to Montreal with over 600 publishers, represented by Saffron Beckwith from Ampersand, Andrea Colquhom and Lahring Trive from Penguin Random House Canada, Lauren Cusack from Thomas Allen & Son, Tim Gain from Canadian Manda Group, Janet Murie from Scholastic Canada, Rosalyn Steele from Harper Collins Canada, and Margot Stokreef from Martin and Associates Sales Agency.³⁷

Wholesalers

Wholesalers are companies that buy books in large quantities and then resell to retailers or libraries. For retailers there are several advantages in purchasing from wholesalers rather than from the publisher or distributor. For libraries, wholesalers like United Library Services (ULS) are set up to meet the provincial and federal requirements for purchasing. ULS also gets the books ready for the library market by providing a Dewey Decimal classification, as well as clear cover coating.³⁸ Other book wholesalers like North 49 and BookExpress are attractive options because of their location and ability to ship books faster than a publisher or distributor can. They carry a wide selection of bestselling books, and advertise themselves as a “one stop shop.”³⁹

Last there are wholesalers who carry more than just books. These wholesalers have established relationships with certain retailers, and can provide the books access to markets they would otherwise have difficulty entering. Hewitt expands “essentially, this wholesaler allows the retailer to work with less suppliers, which means the retailer will be more willing to order books alongside products they are already buying and carrying.”⁴⁰ Without the wholesaler, the retailer would need to find a publisher or distributor, set up an account, and set up payment for a new supplier – not always an attractive solution for a store looking to experiment with bookselling. When selling to a

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015.

³⁹ “Who We Are.” *North49 Books*. <http://www.north49books.com/who.html>.

⁴⁰ Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015.

wholesaler, reps focus on who the end customer is. Hewitt's technique is to emphasize which customer she thinks each book she presents will appeal to.⁴¹

Traditional Retailer

A traditional retailer is a store that sells books, whether the whole store is dedicated solely to books or they just have a designated book section. This includes smaller independent bookstores, as well as national giants like Chapters/Indigo and Costco. Ampersand presents to both small, and large retail depending on their publisher agreement. Some of Ampersand's publishers choose to present to retail giants themselves, while others prefer to use their outside sales reps.

When selling to an independent bookstore Ampersand will either set up a phone appointment, arrange a meeting at one of Ampersand's showrooms, meet at a book fair, or visit the retailer at their store. Ampersand makes an effort to send a rep to each of their retailers at least once a year. Account Manager Dani Farmer says that it is important to visit the store as meeting in person creates a closer bond with the retailer, and allows the rep to see how the store is set up.⁴² Reps can also bring in advance reading copies (ARCs) to get the buyer excited about upcoming books. Hewitt believes meeting the retailer is a vital part of selling: "The nice thing about going to the store is you can meet the staff, not just the buyer, and supply them all with materials to help them hand-sell to the end customer."⁴³

Non-traditional Retail

A non-traditional retailer is any store that is not primarily a bookstore. These accounts often buy from Ampersand's gift lines, but also purchase gift books such as cookbooks, art books, and some children's books. Some non-traditional retailers will also purchase trade books if they have some relevancy to their store. An example is stores specializing in the "Baby Gift" market which will buy both baby gift items including toys

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Farmer, personal communication, October 4, 2015.

⁴³ Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015.

and onesies, as well as books about pregnancy and nursing from Ampersand. Opening non-traditional accounts broadens the scope of where books can be sold.

Selling to non-traditional, or gift accounts is much different from selling to traditional stores. Cheryl Fraser, Vice-President of Ampersand, explains that gift retailers “want to see the book, hold the book, and place it by their cash registers.”⁴⁴ The visual appeal of the book is often more important to the gift buyer than the content. However, the general topic of the book is also valuable, and the best sellers tend to revolve around current “hot” trends. At a seminar put on by the ABPBC (The Association of Book Publishers of British Columbia) which focused on marketing strategies for Canadian Publishers, Cheryl Fraser shared that top trends for the spring 2014 season were Ryan Gosling, Darth Vader, and cats.⁴⁵ When selling to these retailers reps rely heavily on ARC’s and BLAD’s (short for “book layout and design”; a short sample of pages which illustrate what the interior of a book will look like when it’s finished).⁴⁶

Services

Ampersand offers many services to both publishers and retailers, making them a unique sales force. They offer coast-to-coast representation and are “Canada’s only commissioned sales force for the trade, library, wholesaler, chain, mass and gift market.”⁴⁷ They have two showrooms in — in Richmond BC, and Toronto ON — and attend major trade and library shows.⁴⁸ In her 2009 case study on Kate Walker & Company (now Ampersand Inc.) Leslie Bootle explains that the reps do much more than just sell the publishers’ books.⁴⁹ Hewitt describes Ampersand’s sales reps as “the face of the publisher to the account, and the voice of the account to the publisher.”⁵⁰ Ampersand also assists in marketing, promotion, and building the intimate relationships with retailers

⁴⁴ Cheryl Fraser, “How to work with sales reps” (presentation, Marketing and Promotional Strategies for Canadian Publishing, Vancouver, BC, September 11, 2014).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Valerie Peterson, “BLAD - Book Layout and Design.” *About.com – Book Publishing*. <http://publishing.about.com/od/BookPublishingGlossary/g/Blad-Book-Layout-And-Design.htm>.

⁴⁷ “Services” Ampersand Inc., October 10, 2015, <http://ampersandinc.ca/services>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Bootle, “Publishers’ Representatives”, 5.

⁵⁰ Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015.

for their publishers. These services in addition to selling are the reason Ampersand refers to their reps as “Account Managers.”

Showrooms

Ampersand’s showrooms are filled with books and gift material from their publishers, with new arrivals for the operating sales season prominently displayed. The showrooms are available for accounts to visit, and buying appointments are often scheduled there. Due to the number of publishers Ampersand represents, it’s often easier for reps to bring the accounts to the books rather than bring the books to the account.

Viewing the books is also an effective sales strategy. Hearing about a book is much different than being able to see and hold the finished product. Account manager Dani Farmer often encourages her accounts to visit the showroom, stating, “We put a lot of work into displaying the titles, and often it helps the account to visualize how they would display the books in their own store.”⁵¹ Ampersand’s new stationary client Libretto has large bold designs that are quite distinctive, and the reps have found that accounts that are able to see a sample of these different designs placed larger orders.⁵² This is also important for books that don’t show as well in catalogues, such as cookbooks, children’s books, and art books.⁵³ Lastly, the showroom is a great tool when customers have different subject matters in mind, as the reps have easier access to backlist titles.

Once a year, reps will go through the showroom to remove older texts and make room for new books. Ampersand prefers to keep only titles published in the past three years or backlist titles which continue to sell well, with older books being donated to schools and libraries.

⁵¹ Farmer, personal communication, November 3, 2015.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015.

Trade Shows

Ampersand attends book fairs, gift shows, and conferences regularly to better service their customers. There are three main types of shows: The Toronto Gift Fair, Library Conferences, and Regional Book Fairs.

The Toronto Gift Fair

The Toronto Gift Fair is held twice a year, and is the “top national gift fair, and the largest trade fair in Canada.”⁵⁴ The show attracts “more than 24,000 qualified buyers from across Canada each year.”⁵⁵ As an exhibitor, Ampersand is able to attract gift retailers by showcasing their gift lines, as well as coffee-table books such as cookbooks, and art books. A new line of books to enter the gift market is colouring books. Cheryl Fraser has found that colouring books are a great addition to the gift fair, and that many accounts are interested in carrying them.⁵⁶ At the Toronto Gift Fair in September 2015, Ampersand found that it was easy to persuade buyers who were looking to carry colouring books to add other books and gift items to their orders.⁵⁷

Library Conferences

Library Conferences are held regionally for local librarians. Publishers and reps attend to share their upcoming books and to begin placing orders. Attending these conferences is very important for sales reps, as many publishers have books which do not work as well in retail but do well with teachers and librarians.⁵⁸ Orca Books have several series in this market, including “Orca Currents”, “Orca Soundings”, “Orca LimeLights”, and “Rapid Reads.” It is also a good way for the reps to meet new librarians, and for reps to get a sense of general trends in the library market that they can then share back to the publishers. Also, since the conferences are held regionally, it would be difficult for a publisher to attend each and every one, and they rely on Ampersand to make those vital connections for them.

⁵⁴ “Key Facts.” *Toronto Gift Fair*. <https://www.cangift.org/toronto-gift-fair/en/the-fair/key-facts/>.

⁵⁵ “Why Exhibit.” *Toronto Gift Fair*. <https://www.cangift.org/toronto-gift-fair/en/exhibitors/why-exhibit/>.

⁵⁶ Cheryl Fraser, “Spring 2016 Sales Conference” (Vancouver, BC, November 15, 2015).

⁵⁷ “Ampersand INK: September 2015”, e-mail message to publishers, September 1, 2015.

⁵⁸ Farmer, personal communication, November 3, 2015.

Regional Book Fairs

Regional Book Fairs occur in cities across Canada. At them many bookstores meet with publishers and sales reps, account manager Vanessa Di Gregorio describes as “speed dating with bookstores”, and explains that reps meet with accounts individually in one place, often a hotel, and sell them the latest season.⁵⁹ Often the reps will meet with the accounts again in-store to finish orders. The book fairs are similar to the library conferences in that it would be difficult for a publisher to attend each one as they are regional. Since Ampersand makes a strong effort to visit every store they sell to in person, it’s also a chance for them to meet with buyers they won’t have another opportunity to visit.

Table 3: List of Shows in 2016 Ampersand Will Attend⁶⁰

NAME OF SHOW	SEASON	2016 DATES
Ottawa Regional Book Fair	Spring	January 16-20
OLA (Ontario Library Association) Conference	Spring	January 27-30
Toronto Gift Fair	Spring	January 31-February 4
Atlantic Regional Book Fair	Spring	February 6-9
London Regional Book Fair	Spring	February 7-11
BC Regional Book Fair	Spring	February 14-16
Montreal Regional Book Fair	Spring	February 14-18
Alberta Regional Book Fair	Spring	February 22-23
Northern Ontario Regional Book Fair	Spring	March
BC Library Conference	Spring	May 11-13
BC Regional Book Fair	Summer	June
Montreal Regional Book Fair	Summer	June 19-23
London Regional Book Fair	Summer	June 20-24
Ottawa Regional Book Fair	Summer	June 25-29
Alberta Regional Book Fair	Summer	June 27-28
Atlantic Regional Book Fair	Summer	July
Toronto Gift Fair	Fall	August 7-10
Northern Ontario Book Fair	Fall	September

⁵⁹ Vanessa Di Gregorio, e-mail message to Paulina Dabrowski, June 3, 2015.

⁶⁰ Tamara Mair, e-mail message to Paulina Dabrowski, November 5, 2015.

Promo News

Ampersand mails out a monthly promotional newsletter called “Promo News” to accounts all across Canada. The purpose of the newsletter is to inform accounts of relevant marketing and promotional material acquired as the season passes. This gives accounts a chance to place early orders, or showcase popular books in their stores so that they are easy for customers to find.

The information is gathered from publishers who often send their own promotional news mailer to their sales representatives. For example, Raincoast Books updates a media log every Friday afternoon which contains an event grid, publicity and marketing announcements, cover and author images, and press clippings which are mostly Canadian reviews and author interviews. This is done for all of their publishers.⁶¹ Some publishers send their own promotional news to Ampersand as well. D&M sends a weekly promotional newsletter to reps which contains bestseller information, forthcoming author interviews, book reviews, author signings and events, and features in print and online.⁶²

The newsletter contains the following headers: Award Winners, Award Short/Long Listed, National Publicity, International Publicity, Forthcoming National Publicity, and International Forthcoming Publicity. Currently, the newsletter is not formatted for specific regions, so any promotional news that is city-specific is left out. This also means events are often left out. To keep the newsletter timely, the newsletter only contains promotional materials from two weeks prior to the mailing, and a month forward from the mailing. Along the right side of the newsletter are pictures of the books mentioned along with price and ISBN information. The newsletter also highlights Ampersand’s social media networks.

Ampersand is currently working on expanding their promotional newsletter by organizing their subscribers regionally. This would allow them to create a regional newsletter so that events and city-specific promotional can be shared.

⁶¹ Fleur Matthewson, e-mail message to Ampersand Inc. reps, October 30, 2015.

⁶² Douglas & Macintyre, e-mail message to Ampersand Inc. reps, October 29, 2015.

Ampersand INK

Ampersand INK is a newsletter sent monthly to the publishers represented by Ampersand. It is an incredibly valuable tool for publishers, as it keeps them updated on the bookstore market. It also helps erase the disconnect publishers have with their customers. It was originally called “The National Sales Report”, but changed its name and format in 2013 to look more current and readable.⁶³

In the “What You Need to Know” section of the newsletter, Ampersand includes information for the publisher about important events and opportunities that month. This includes book fair and gift shows, new promotion initiatives Ampersand is undertaking, and summaries of what the reps and the retailers have been doing. In the “Dates to Remember” section, Ampersand includes upcoming sales conferences, when catalogues need to be received, deadlines for the reps to receive sales materials, and upcoming fairs, shows and festivals, as well as buy dates for national stores like Indigo.

“Retailer News” includes stores which Ampersand reps have recently visited, store sales information, promotional strategies stores are using, relocations and new store openings, staff changes and new ownership, news from the community, as well as pictures from the stores showcasing publishers’ displays. This specific and detailed information helps inform publishers of the market their books are in, as well as how the books are perceived by store owners, and by the buying public. “General News from Libraries and Library Wholesalers” contains updates on the library market, and provides the publishers with information about new library collections, as well as planned events and success of past events.

“Trends” is a general section of Ampersand INK whose content changes month to month. In it, Ampersand shares trends they have noticed in the book market as a whole, and information about which direction the trends are heading in. It is also a space for Ampersand to share ongoing requests from booksellers and their customers. In the August 2015 issue, for instance they wrote “customers are looking for children’s books in which the grandparents look younger than 80.”⁶⁴ Previous trends include popular book categories, trending book-related hashtags, needs in the book market, and amusing but

⁶³ Tamara Mair, e-mail message to Paulina Dabrowski, November 12, 2015.

⁶⁴ “Ampersand INK: August 2015”, e-mail message to publishers, August 1, 2015.

relevant observations such as “hedgehogs are the new owls” and “fairies and terrariums are hot.”^{65,66}

“New Accounts” is a list of accounts that Ampersand has opened that month. Provided is the store name, address, phone number, email, contact information, appointed account manager, as well as a short summary of what type of store it is. This section also has information about accounts which are facing difficulty or are closing, with an explanation. “Displays/Shows/Fairs Attended this Month” contains a list of displays, shows, and fairs that Ampersand reps have attended, as well as a summary of their experience.

“Seasonal Questions” was a section which featured in several issues in 2015 where Ampersand ask their retailers questions from publishers. For 2015 Ampersand asked its retailers “When do you pull returns? By publisher or by date?”, “How do you buy books – seasonally or by month?” “Are you or your staff undergoing any training to allow yourself to order online more?”, and “Is there any help you need from our lines to move on to online ordering?”⁶⁷

Social Media Marketing

Ampersand is currently followed on social media by 1,381 followers on Twitter, 287 likes on Facebook, and 511 followers on Instagram.^{68,69,70} They are a combination of “publishers, gift lines, retailers, book lovers, and the general public.”⁷¹ The goal of Ampersand’s social media, according to account manager Jenny Enriquez, is to “engage with the community, promote our client publishers, show off our company culture, and attract new lines and retailers to our company.”⁷² They retweet promotional news from publishers, share event information, post pictures of new books as well as model clothing from their gift lines.

⁶⁵ “Ampersand INK: July 2015”, e-mail message to publishers, July 1, 2015.

⁶⁶ “Ampersand INK: March 2015”, e-mail message to publishers, March 1, 2015.

⁶⁷ “Ampersand INK: July 2015”, e-mail message to publishers, July 1, 2015.

⁶⁸ Ampersand Inc., *Twitter*, February 16, 2016, <https://twitter.com/ampersandinc>

⁶⁹ Ampersand Inc., *Facebook*. February 16, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/AmpersandCanada/>.

⁷⁰ Ampersand Inc., *Instagram*, February 16, 2016, <https://www.instagram.com/ampersandinc/>.

⁷¹ Jenny Enriquez, e-mail message to Paulina Dabrowski, December 7, 2015.

⁷² Enriquez, e-mail message, December 7, 2015.

On October 16, 2015, Ampersand created a video blog on YouTube in which Ali Hewitt and Dani Farmer produce episodes highlighting different titles. As of February 16, 2016, they have created nine episodes including “Key Kids Titles for October”, “Canadian Picture Books”, “Canadian Fiction” and others.⁷³ The move into video blogging came from a desire to connect with the “booktube” community which is described as a “community of YouTubers talking about and celebrating books.”⁷⁴ The video blog also serves as a way to connect with accounts farther away and more difficult to visit.⁷⁵ It is also useful for librarians, who do not often attend book fairs.

In choosing content for the videos, Dani Farmer says that it is important it be broad enough to be relevant for accounts all over Canada, and also feature books that are timely: “We want our accounts to get excited about new titles, so we don’t want to feature books which have a release date set too far ahead. It also helps if we have an advance copy so that we can present the book as a finished product.”⁷⁶

Sales Conferences

Ampersand meets with their publishers at three sales conferences a year, either in person or online, for the fall, winter, and spring seasons. The fall season is presented in April, winter season in August, and spring in November.

The conferences last about two weeks and are held in Richmond, Vancouver and Toronto unless they are virtual. Ampersand arranges separate conferences for publishers that are not distributed by Raincoast, as Raincoast arranges its own conference.

Publishers Distributed by Raincoast

Publishers who are distributed by Raincoast like Chronicle Books and Silver Dolphin attend a conference which is organized by Raincoast. Raincoast conferences occur for fall and spring seasons and typically take four days. They are held in a conference room in Vancouver, BC, and reps for both Ampersand and Hornblower Group

⁷³ Ampersand Inc., *YouTube*, February 16, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfO6NM-C5KxJCujx3t_hwg.

⁷⁴ “Your Crash Course on the Booktube Community”, playlist, *YouTube*, February 16, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHidivwwcWAjhT94hL_BKE7qseH5tXsAs.

⁷⁵ Farmer, personal communication, November 3, 2015.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

(sales rep agency representing Raincoast in Eastern Canada) attend. Also in attendance is Raincoast's publicity, marketing, and sales teams. These conferences are held after Ampersand meets with their publishers in Richmond.

Publishers Not Distributed by Raincoast

How each publisher attends depends on their location and availability. Western publishers like UBC Press and Orca Books meet in Richmond. Depending on the number of publishers able to attend, the Richmond portion of the conference typically lasts one to two days and reps can meet with up to seven publishers in a day. Following the Richmond portion, and the Raincoast portion, is the Toronto portion of the conference where Ampersand meets with its Eastern publishers including Goose Lane Editions and University of Toronto Press. The Toronto conference lasts two to three days with up to seven publishers meeting in a day.

Some publishers who are unable to attend, such as Freehand Books, a small publisher based in Calgary, perform their meeting with the reps online. These can take place before, during, or after the Richmond and Toronto portion. Publishers individually arrange a time with Ampersand. Due to the difficulty scheduling multiple publishers, and the cost for many publishers to travel to the conference, virtual conferences are a great option. They are especially helpful for smaller publishers, and also for all publishers during smaller seasons. Each year one sales conference is entirely virtual for all of Ampersand's publishers. While this use to be the Winter conference, as of 2016 it will become the Spring conference.⁷⁷ Ampersand's operations manager Tamara Mair sets each meeting up, and reps are able to attend the conference from their computers. Reps also use computer microphones to ask questions or give feedback (much like they would do in an in-person setting).

At the sales conference, publishers hand out their upcoming catalogues and go over the titles with the reps. Ideally these catalogues include: title, subtitle, author name, book summary, author biography, release date, page number, trim size, list of illustrations or photographs, ISBN, book format, price, and subject or BISAC codes. In addition to the

⁷⁷ Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015.

catalogue's information, presenters share more detailed information they feel is important for reps to know. This includes author hometown information, sales figures for previous books in a series, who they see the audience as, comparable titles, and marketing and promotional plans. They also share their key selling points for each title. For some titles, publishers bring in sample copies, which is especially beneficial for books with lots of visual material.

Conferences are also an opportunity for the reps to make suggestions before the books are published. This can include cover changes, audience changes, release dates, and production suggestions such as going colour instead of black and white. Reps can also make suggestions for the marketing and promotion of the book by sharing trends they have seen in the market, and past experiences with similar titles. Sales conferences are also an opportunity for the reps to discuss overall sales initiatives with the publisher and express what things are working and what things aren't based on sales and feedback from retailers for the past season.

Prior to 2015, publishers were asked to provide full kits which consisted of the catalogue as well as each title's tip sheets, and previous season's sales data. Ampersand is now asking their publishers not to bring full kits, but rather provide this additional information electronically.

Catalogue Mailing

Ampersand mails out catalogues to libraries and retailers twice a year, once for the fall and once for the spring seasons. Mailing dates are extremely strict, as the catalogues must be sent out with enough time for the retailer to read through them before a rep meets them for a buying appointment. For this reason, it is vital that publishers get their catalogues printed and mailed to Ampersand on time, otherwise they miss the mailing window.

Catalogue mailing is done by sorting the catalogues alphabetically on tables. Reps then work together to custom kits specific to each of their independent stores. Each store is assessed first by location, so that the rep is not sending a catalogue to a store which is not in their territory. For example, Ampersand receives catalogues from D&M, but does not represent them in Eastern Canada so they do not mail out D&M catalogues to their

Eastern stores. Each retailer is then assessed by its buying habits. In order to create these kits the reps need to not only be familiar with the store's inventory and customer base, but also know the books in each specific catalogue from their publisher. When creating a kit for a retailer that specializes in First Nations products for instance, the reps will gather all the catalogues which contain First Nations books. Many publishers also don't publish certain genres and topics consistently, and so the reps need to remember when a publisher has books outside their usual genre list. For example, a publisher which is known for fiction might have a cookbook in their list for that season, so the reps need to remember to send that catalogue to cookbook retailers. Reps use catalogue mailing as a way to introduce their stores to new publishers they haven't previously purchased from by making connections with that list to the store.

After a kit is arranged, reps include several handouts including "Rep's Picks", "Specials and Discounts", and either a "Library Guide", "Retailer Guide", or "Gift Account Guide". There are four variations of each handout which are created specific to the region they are being mailed to: West, East, Atlantic, and Quebec. "Rep's Picks" feature books Ampersand reps have selected as having great potential. "Specials and Discounts" is a collection of discounts made available to the retailer from the publisher including specific conditions. Previous specials from publishers have included "Purchase 25 or more Backlist Titles and receive an extra 5% discount", or "Orders of \$1000 wholesale or more by December 31st receives free freight." Having these specials from each publisher collectively on one sheet makes it easier for the retailer to keep track and benefit from the extra savings. It also encourages them to order more books and titles from new publishers.

The "Library Guide", "Retailer Guide", and "Gift Account Guide" are another way reps made ordering easier for the retailer. Librarians receive the "Library Guide", while traditional accounts receive the "Retailer Guide", and non-traditional accounts receive the "Gift Account Guide". The "Library Guide" consists of a list of all the publishers Ampersand represents in the specific region of that library, or library system. The "Retailer Guide" is a list of all the publishers and gift lines Ampersand represents in the specific region of that store, the distributors for those publishers and gift lines, a list of Ampersand account managers for that region, as well as distributor terms. Distributor

terms include whether orders can be combined, minimums to order, discount off list price given, shipping information and cost, and billing information. Ampersand also includes this information for independent distribution. The “Gift Account Guide” contains the distributors terms for only the gift lines, a list of Ampersand account managers for that specific region, a list of book publishers that Ampersand also represents, and supplier contacts. Once kits are assembled with both the catalogues and appropriate sheets, they are mailed out.

PART 3: A DECADE OF BIG CHANGES

Since Leslie Bootle's report on Ampersand (formally Kate Walker & Company) in 2009, there have been significant changes in the publishing industry including bankruptcies, changes in consumer buying attitudes, and a push for earlier buying dates. These changes have affected every member of the Canadian publishing industry, and have changed the way books are sold.

Speaking with the CBC in 2012 directly following the bankruptcy of publishing house Douglas & MacIntyre, Rowland Lorimer, the director of the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing at Simon Fraser University, stated that "increasingly, well-heeled international publishing houses are the only outfits that can afford to do business in today's changing publishing climate."⁷⁸

Lorimer wasn't the only one with dim hopes for Canadian publishing's future. Charles Foran shared similar predictions in *The Walrus* in 2013 and shared reasons publishers need to worry: "Depending on who is pointing the finger, they include the rise of e-books and Amazon.ca; too many titles for too few buyers; the routing of supportive independent booksellers by Chapters/Indigo; the impossibility of competing with deep-pocketed multinational publishers for authors and market space; and, more cosmically, the atomization of everything, especially attention spans, in our digital world."⁷⁹ While there have been impacts, publishers, sales reps, and booksellers, have found ways to sell books.

Buying Attitudes

One of the biggest changes to the sales sector of the publishing industry is where customers buy their books, and what format they buy their books in. The electronic book (e-book) was created in 1971, though it wasn't until 1994 that the National Academy press became the first publisher to "post the full text of some books, for free, with the

⁷⁸ The Canadian Press, "Douglas & MacIntyre owner files for bankruptcy," *CBC News*, last modified October 23, 2012, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/douglas-mcintyre-owner-files-for-bankruptcy-1.1139742>.

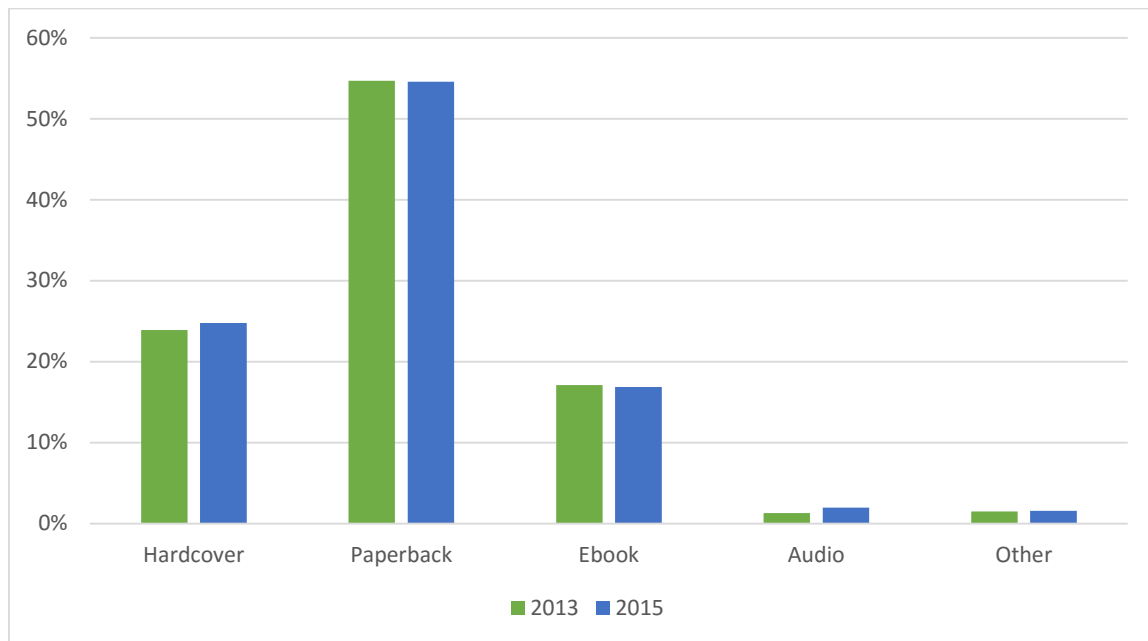
⁷⁹ Charles Foran, Roxanna Bikadoroff, "End of a Story," *The Walrus*, March, 2013, <http://thewalrus.ca/end-of-story/>.

authors’ consent.”⁸⁰ By 2003 e-books were being sold worldwide.⁸¹ The first popular e-reading devices were created in 2003 (the Sony Reader) and 2007 (Amazon Kindle).⁸² In 2009 e-books accounted for only 3-5% of American book sales but sales had increased by 177% since 2008.⁸³ The increase of e-book sales has several benefits to publishers, as e-books are cheaper to produce, require no warehousing, and rarely result in returns. For sales reps, however, an increase in e-book sales results in a loss of commission.

Ebook Sales

In 2015, Book Net Canada reported that e-book sales accounted for 16.9% of all book purchases, a 0.2% decrease since 2013.⁸⁴ The following table shows Book Net Canada’s data on sales by format for 2013 and 2015.

Table 4: Percentage of Sales by Format in 2013 versus 2015⁸⁵



⁸⁰ Marie Lebert, “A Short History of eBooks,” (University of Toronto, 2009), 20.

⁸¹ Lebert, “A Short History of eBooks,” 65.

⁸² Lebert, “A Short History of eBooks,” 79.

⁸³ Ken Auletta, “Publish or Perish,” *The New Yorker*, April 26, 2010, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/04/26/publish-or-perish>

⁸⁴ “The Canadian Book Buyer 2015,” *BookNet Canada*, October, 2015, 9.

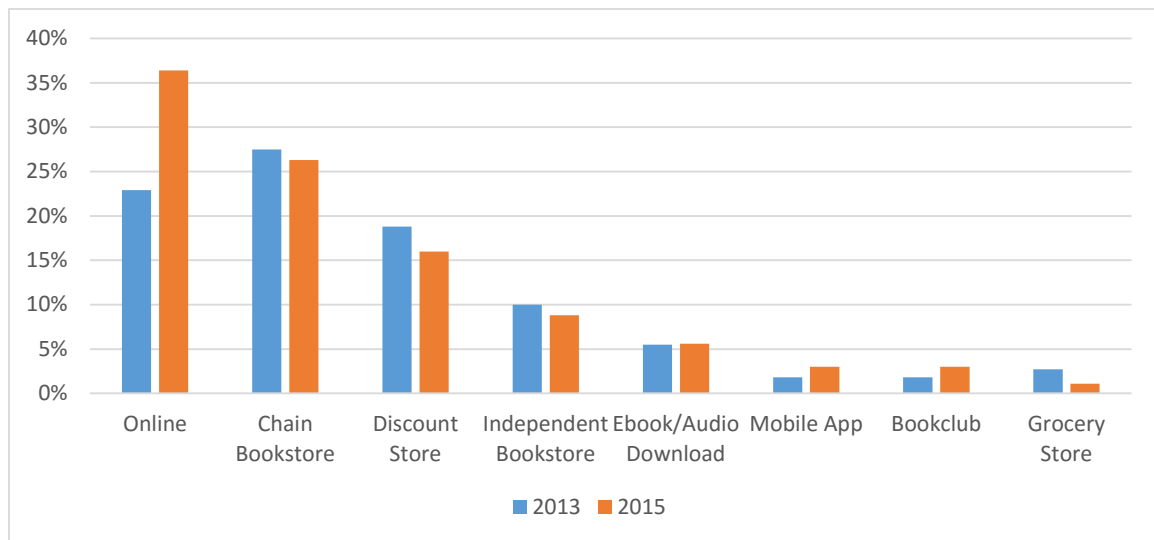
⁸⁵ Ibid.

While Ampersand does represent a number of trade publishers, they also have the benefit of representing children’s books, art books, and other genres which do not translate as well to e-book technology. For this reason, Ali Hewitt explains that their sales have not been significantly impacted.⁸⁶ In addition, most e-book readers are what are known as “hybrid readers.” In a presentation for Tech Forum in March 2015, Mary Alice Elcock, VP of Marketing and Publisher Relations for BitLit Media said that only 4% of readers are digital only.⁸⁷ This means that 96% of the reading public is still purchasing print books.

Purchase Locations

Another change in consumer buying is where people are buying their books. While Ampersand do sell to retailers who allow customers to buy books online, a significant portion of their retailers exist in-store only. The following table represents changes in where consumers purchased their books in 2013 and 2015. Note that all four kinds Note that all four kinds of physical (brick and mortar) stores saw their piece of the pie decrease while online store sales went from 22.9% to 36.4%.

Table 5: Percentage of Sales by Location Purchased in 2013 versus 2015⁸⁸



⁸⁶ Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015.

⁸⁷ Mary Alice Elcock, “Bundle up: Everything you need to know about eBook bundling” *Tech Forum 2015* video, 28:50, March 12, 2015, <https://BookNetcanada.wistia.com/medias/9s1xyug0q7>.

⁸⁸ “The Canadian Book Buyer 2015,” *BookNet Canada*, October, 2015, 6.

The New Yorker reports that in the 12 years from 1999 to 2010, the number of booksellers in the United States of America declined from 3,250 to 1,400.⁸⁹ Canada is similar, with rising rents and online sales being the main culprits for bookstore closure. In 2012 HarperCollins Canada's then President, David Kent, told *Publishers Weekly*:

“It's not easy being independent in a relatively low margin business if they start jacking up the rents. They are being challenged by pricing because of e-books and because of the exchange rate. We've all lowered our list prices.”⁹⁰

It isn't only the independent bookstores that are taking a hit. In 2014 Chapters Indigo closed three superstores in Toronto, and a number of small stores since then across Canada.⁹¹ However, Iolanda Millar, a sales rep for Manda Group, feels that bookstores still have opportunity to flourish and that the bookstores that are flexible and open to trying new ways to sell books and get customers, will continue to have great business.⁹² Ali Hewitt shares this belief and comments, “the bookstores that are still here, are here for a reason. They are the best retailer for their customer, and that can't be replaced.”⁹³ The same attitude is found in an article entitled “Is Canada Seeing the Death of the Niche Bookstore?” by Trena White, co-founder of agency Page Two Strategies. In it, Phyllis Simon, owner of Vancouver's Kidsbooks, shares “Our booksellers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and really there to help our customers choose great books. Our customers appreciate the value we give in ensuring (as much as humanly possible) that the books they are buying are bang on.”⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Ken Auletta, “Publish or Perish,” *The New Yorker*, April 26, 2010, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/04/26/publish-or-perish>.

⁹⁰ Leigh Anne Williams, “What's Ahead for Canadian Indies?,” *Publishers Weekly*, March 30, 2012, <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/bookselling/article/51299-what-s-ahead-for-canadian-indies.html>.

⁹¹ Melissa Dunne, “Are Canadian bookstores headed towards extinction?” *Metronews*, May 8, 2014, <http://www.metronews.ca/news/canada/2014/05/09/are-we-witnessing-the-death-of-the-canadian-bookstore.html>.

⁹² Iolanda Millar, personal communication with Paulina Dabrowski, November 13, 2015.

⁹³ Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015.

⁹⁴ Trena White, “Is Canada Seeing the Death of the Niche Bookstore?” *Digital Book World*, March 3, 2014, <http://www.digitalbookworld.com/2014/is-canada-seeing-the-death-of-the-niche-bookstore/>.

Books Made in Canada

There is increasing potential for Canadian publishers as Canadian consumers are increasingly purchasing more products made in Canada. This trend has been most evident with Ampersand's gift lines, and they've found at the Toronto Gift Fair that more and more buyers are asking where products are made.⁹⁵ This trend could manifest in book sales if more efforts were made to raise awareness of books written and published in Canada. BookNet Canada published a study in 2012 entitled "Canadians Reading Canadians" in which they gauged the demand and awareness of Canadian books. They found "across the board, the research shows a declining awareness of Canadian content, but not a declining interest."⁹⁶ Over 75% of Canadians either hadn't read a Canadian author, or weren't sure if they had. However, 76% of book consumers expressed interest in reading books by Canadian authors.⁹⁷ Book awareness and discoverability is a problem publishers are constantly tackling, but if the interest in Canadian content exists publishers should emphasize their books with Canadian ties. Maple leaves or other cultural symbols can be implemented into the book design, marketing and promotional materials can highlight the Canadian connection, and publishers can reach out to other publishers and booksellers to create clear displays where Canadian books can be featured.

D&M Bankruptcy

On October 22, 2012, Canadian publishing house Douglas & McIntyre filed for bankruptcy protection.⁹⁸ The bankruptcy split D&M into 3 separate publishing houses, Douglas & McIntyre, Greystone Books, and New Society Press. Ampersand continues to represent D&M and New Society, while Greystone is represented by Heritage Group in Western Canada and Hornblower in Eastern Canada. Former employees of D&M also created agency Page Two Strategies, and Figure 1 Publishing, which Ampersand also represents.

⁹⁵ "Ampersand INK: February 2015", e-mail message to publishers, February 1, 2015.

⁹⁶ "Ask A Reader: Do readers care if an author is Canadian?" *BookNet Canada* (blog), August 25, 2015, <http://www.BookNetcanada.ca/blog/2015/8/25/ask-a-reader-do-readers-care-if-an-author-is-canadian>.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ The Canadian Press, "Douglas & McIntyre owner files for bankruptcy," *CBC News*, last modified October 23, 2012, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/douglas-mcintyre-owner-files-for-bankruptcy-1.1139742>.

Many publishers looked at the D&M bankruptcy, and took away some lessons. Hewitt believes what resulted is some publishers publishing fewer titles a season, and adding titles in genres which have shown to produce better sales such as cookbooks and art books, while subtracting the number of titles in poorer selling genres such as poetry.⁹⁹ Another result from the bankruptcy was D&M's authors moving to smaller publishing houses and helping these publishers compete with the lists of large publishers.¹⁰⁰

Push for Earlier Dates

On November 2, 2015, Chapters Indigo moved their buying timeframe up by two months, to keep in line with buy dates in the United States.¹⁰¹ This change is occurring worldwide but while American publishers have already been making the switch, British publishers and small Canadian publishers are finding the transition difficult.¹⁰² Ali Hewitt explains that “the buyers at Chapter Indigo need more time to plan their buys, as well as their displays. This will also keep the Canadian publishing industry up to date with what the American publishing industry is doing.”¹⁰³

By moving their buy dates sooner, a chain reactions ripples through the publishing industry. Sales reps, like Ampersand, must now present their titles earlier which means sales conference dates need to be brought forward. Publishers also need to begin work earlier in each season, so that they can have the appropriate material ready for the sales conferences. Lastly, other retailers will also need to push their buy dates earlier so that they are in sync with the season reps are presenting. The following figure shows the Chapters Indigo buy dates for 2016 to 2017.

In preparing for earlier buy dates, Ampersand has brought the dates for their three sales conferences forward by two weeks compared to previous years. Currently, spring 2016 is presented in November 2015, fall 2016 in April 2016, and winter 2017 in August 2016.¹⁰⁴ Also affected are the book fairs. Currently, with changes in publishing schedules, Book Fairs occur toward the very end of the buying season, sometimes mere

⁹⁹ Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Saffron Beckwith, e-mail message to Ampersand reps, November 2, 2015.

¹⁰² Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

weeks before the next season's sales conference but because there are so many stakeholders, moving book fair dates has proved to be a challenge.¹⁰⁵ Ampersand along with other rep agencies and in-house reps from multi-national publishers are hoping the dates can be moved, so that independent bookstores will continue to be able to meet with reps and be presented lists.

E-catalogues

Many publishers are considering dropping their print catalogues, and producing online e-catalogues only. HarperCollins became the first large publishing house to attempt this switch back in 2009, and many publishers, including Ampersand's, have since stopped printing, like DK Publishing.¹⁰⁶ In addition to saving print costs, this switch also helps make sure the catalogues are up to date; any changed or missing information is immediately updated. Elizabeth Kemp's report entitled "The Raincoast eCatalogue" explains that the print catalogue is prepared four months before the selling season and often entails many changes, including "amendments to the book title, subtitle, price, and trim size."¹⁰⁷ Sales reps then need to be notified of the changes, and then communicate those changes back to the book buyers.¹⁰⁸ E-catalogues help guarantee that all the information presented to a buyer is up to date and correct, which reflects favorably on both the rep and the publisher.

Using systems like BookNet's CataList can also provide retailers with added tools like seeing peer sales information which can help inform their buying, and publishers can create custom lists for easier ordering.¹⁰⁹ Retailers, however, continue to push publishers for print catalogues, finding it difficult to learn a new system so different from how they've been buying books for years.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Elizabeth Kemp, "The Raincoast eCatalogue: The Creation of an Electronic Selling Tool for Sales Representatives" (Simon Fraser University, 2011), 13.

¹⁰⁷ Kemp, "The Raincoast eCatalogue", 6

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015.

¹¹⁰ "Ampersand INK: July 2015", e-mail message to publishers, July 1, 2015.

Other criticisms of e-catalogues are the difficulty in making notes and comments, and sharing these with staff.¹¹¹ One retailer has its buyers trained in using both Edelweiss and CataList, but finds they “revert to paper if they can as they still feel that it is faster.”¹¹² One retailer explained that they order from a large number of suppliers, and learning how to use each supplier’s on-line ordering system is impossible.¹¹³ Lastly, there is concern from booksellers that a move to e-catalogues means a less intimate ordering experience with reps. They have informed Ampersand that there is a need to be walked through ordering as it is “too overwhelming otherwise.”¹¹⁴ Currently, many publishers are opting to use both, but are encouraging retailers to switch to digital.

While Ampersand Inc. has trained its reps in using e-catalogues and online ordering systems, they understand the aversion many booksellers feel. Many of Ampersand’s reps themselves take notes during sales conferences on paper catalogues. Kemp expresses that “Raincoast sales reps [Ampersand Inc. and Hornblower Group] need to resist habit and accept that the book industry is becoming a data-dependent business.”¹¹⁵ Until book management systems become clean, easy to use, and finalized, publishers will find that their sales reps and book buyers don’t share the same sentiments. In 2015 Ampersand continues to experiment with the use of e-catalogues, and educating their retailers on how they can be used.

¹¹¹ “Ampersand INK: October 2015”, e-mail message to publishers, October 1, 2015.

¹¹² “Ampersand INK: June 2015”, e-mail message to publishers, June 1, 2015.

¹¹³ “Ampersand INK: April 2015”, e-mail message to publishers, April 1, 2015.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Kemp, “The Raincoast eCatalogue”, 42.

PART 4: BRIGHT FUTURE

Moving forward, there are several ways for publishers and booksellers to maximize book sales while adapting to the changes facing the industry. The following lists suggestions identified by sales reps at Ampersand and by the author.

Publishers

Pre-publication

The ability to increase book sales starts with acquisition. While staying true to their publishing vision, it is vital that publishers be aware of the marketplace. They must be able to identify holes in the book market, as well as oversaturation, where there is a surplus of books.¹¹⁶ Even if a manuscript has the potential to be the best on a certain topic or genre, it is important to remember that booksellers may still be carrying earlier comparable titles and not be as keen to purchase more. Subject matter is also important, as it must relate to the end customer in some way. An example is a book about a prominent political American figure, where publishers should be aware not to expect high sales from the Canadian market. Publishers should also have 1-2 BISAC codes selected for the book which they believe are the closest fit. At the 2016 spring conference, reps had difficulty with one publisher's book as it had BISAC codes for "cultural critique", "parenting", "science", and "self-help."¹¹⁷ Having varying BISACs makes it difficult to determine which market the book is intended for. It also provides a challenge to booksellers who will have difficulty deciding where to place that book in-store.

Book design and production is also very important. It is advisable for publishers to look at other books in the genre to see which styles are used. The design must also be age appropriate for the expected audience of the book, as well as gender appropriate. At the spring 2016 sales conference, reps had advised a publisher not to publish a cookbook in black and white, as competing titles were in full colour and the first point of judgment on a cookbook lies in how it looks, rather than the recipes in it.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015.

¹¹⁷ Saffron Beckwith, "Spring 2016 Sales Conference" (Vancouver, BC, November 15, 2015).

¹¹⁸ Saffron Beckwith, "Spring 2016 Sales Conference" (Vancouver, BC, November 15, 2015).

Publishers should also be careful when choosing comparable titles. Ampersand rep Mark Penney suggests having “writing” and “sales” comparables; “it’s always great to see books that want to be the next *Harry Potter* or *Twilight* but unfortunately for many books it’s an unrealistic comparison. What’s better, is to say the writing is comparable to this blockbuster novel, and for sales we’re expecting closer to this b-list title.”¹¹⁹ Publishers should also share with reps approximate marketing and publicity budgets so that reps know which books have higher financial backing.

As for format, there is concern from booksellers about the number of titles published in hardcover. Booksellers have difficulty selling hardcover books because of how much more expensive they are than their softcover counterparts. One bookseller said that “trade paper originals with attendant publicity” work better in their store than hardcovers.¹²⁰ An increasing issue for booksellers who chose not to order hardcover is being excited about an upcoming book, but forgetting about it by the time it’s released in paperback.¹²¹ In Figure 4 (on page 30 of this report) BookNet found that 54.6% of books purchased were in paperback, while only 24.8% were in hardcover.¹²² Though there is a higher profit margin for publishers in hardcover titles, they lose significant profit by pushing the hardcover format.

Lastly, publishers should remember to add page numbers in their catalogues as many buyers are interested in the length of books. It also helps reps if Canadian authors are identified clearly. Many publishers opt to include a Canadian flag beside the author name where appropriate.

Sales Conferences

Sales conferences are a key opportunity to get sales reps excited about the upcoming list. The better the presentation, the better equipped the reps will be to sell the books. Great presentations start with the speaker. Iolanda Millar, a Canadian Manda Group sales rep, suggests having multiple speakers present the list. “Presentations can last an hour or more, by having different speakers it helps keep the presentations

¹¹⁹ Mark Penney, personal communication with Paulina Dabrowski, May 25, 2015.

¹²⁰ “Ampersand INK: March 2015”, e-mail message to publishers, March 1, 2015.

¹²¹ “Ampersand INK: October 2015”, e-mail message to publishers, October 1, 2015.

¹²² “The Canadian Book Buyer 2015,” *BookNet Canada*, 9.

interesting and the reps focused.”¹²³ Since reps have catalogues in front of them, it is unnecessary for publishers to repeat the same information. Ali Hewitt suggests that publishers be able to summarize the book in one or two sentences.¹²⁴

Iolanda Millar lists five key things that are important to sales reps: key facts not present in the catalogue, three hooks or sales handles, residence and hometown of the author, expected audience, and visuals.¹²⁵

At the spring 2016 conference there were several key questions reps had for most of their publishers. For each book, reps were looking to hear of any confirmed media and expected author visits.¹²⁶ Publicity is a key selling tool, and though fewer spaces exist for advertising, it’s a call for publishers to get creative. When reps know which cities will have lots of promotion, they have another selling point for local retailers. Publishers should also be careful of using generic buzz words when describing their books such as “phenomenon”, “powerful”, “fascinating”, and “original”. Due to their overuse, these descriptors don’t help inform the reps about the book. Reps prefer concise and specific descriptions which will give them a clear picture of how the publisher sees the book.

Booksellers

Pre-Publication

The success of a book’s sales in a retail store starts with how bookstores order books. Due to the large number of books presented to booksellers, the book buyer must know their customer and what they are looking for. Looking at the past season’s sales is a great indicator as to buying trends, and can point the buyer to the subject areas their customers want most. It is also possible for booksellers to drive customers to certain books by boosting visibility. Booksellers need to be confident in their selections and take risks, using returns as a safety net. Ali Hewitt suggests booksellers buy fewer books in higher quantities, “when buyers purchase many titles in few numbers, it creates a space issue. It also becomes more difficult to identify customer buying trends. I always suggest booksellers buy less titles but in larger numbers and really get behind the book by reading

¹²³ Millar, personal communication, November 13, 2015.

¹²⁴ Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015.

¹²⁵ Millar, personal communication, November 13, 2015.

¹²⁶ “Spring 2016 Sales Conference” (Vancouver, BC, November 15, 2015).

the ARC, and giving it more display place.”¹²⁷ Book buyers are often in a position where they designate space for books. If the book buyer is passionate about a book, they can attract customers visually by giving the book a feature and more shelf space, instead of having it compete with other titles. Retail book giant Chapters Indigo has also faced issues with book discoverability, and is moving towards stocking more “commercially viable” titles which will be given appropriate space, while keeping more obscure titles stocked in their warehouse for indigo.ca orders.¹²⁸ If book buyers order less books in higher quantities, and plan to give those books better visibility and display, they will be in a better position to attract customers. They will also be more informed on the titles they are selling, which can assist them with customer queries.

Post-publication

Once the retailer gets its order, it needs a strategy to get that book in the hands of customers. In addition to display, the most important factor on sales is the bookseller. It’s important for bookstores to have staff that read widely, and are able to then hand-sell books.¹²⁹ The best way for booksellers to be ready is for the buyer to communicate with the rest of the staff which books they are excited about. They can also pass along ARC’s, or organize monthly reading challenges. The bookseller is the last person responsible for getting customers to purchase, and their role is very important both to the bookseller and to reps and publishers. Due to the publishing practice of accepting book returns, the commission reps make when the selling season finishes is significantly lower than the commission they receive after returns are sent because reps don’t make commission on returns. Returns are also difficult for the bookseller as they have to send the books back, and wait on a refund from the publisher.

Another key aspect of bookselling is having clear succession plans. Ampersand reps have found that many bookstores have closed following an owner’s retirement.¹³⁰ Other bookstores have suffered when buyer changes have been made quickly, and the

¹²⁷ Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015

¹²⁸ Ampersand INK: February 2015”, e-mail message to publishers, February 1, 2015.

¹²⁹ Hewitt, personal communication, December 7, 2015.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

new buyer didn't have enough time to be trained on the store's sales history, buying plans, and current trends.¹³¹

¹³¹ *ibid.*

PART 5: CONCLUSION

Sales representatives are key figures in the publishing industry and add incredible value to their publishers. Both in-house and commissioned sales representatives assist in placing the book where the end consumer will find it. They build relationships with retailers on the publisher's behalf and assist in communicating needs from the retailer to the publisher. Though industry changes over the past ten years have affected sales, new potentials have also arisen. Publishers have many options when choosing the right sales strategy for their company, and even small publishers with limited budgets can create a strong sales force. A publisher must consider both in-house and commissioned reps, while considering budgetary restrictions. Publishers can also expand their market to online retailers and wholesale clients.

Ampersand Inc. is a company with more than 58 years of experience selling books. Their reps are knowledgeable, dedicated, and constantly adapting with changing markets and trends. They help ease the books' transition from publisher to market, and offer many valuable services for publishers and booksellers including sales conferences, newsletters, and in-person buying appointments. Since they are in the center of the publisher-retailer relationship, and represent many different publishers, they can offer crucial feedback and help the industry as a whole navigate through changes such as bankruptcies and closures, changes in buying attitudes, a move to electronic ordering, and a push for earlier season dates.

Facing Challenges

Ampersand themselves have risen to the challenges the publishing industry has been faced with in the past decade. The company understands that book publishing is always changing, and have never been afraid to adapt and change. The rise of e-books challenged Ampersand's role in the industry. If readers are buying an e-book version of a book they are very rarely buying a physical book as well. That loss in business for the brick and mortar bookseller entails a loss in commission for the sales rep. Ampersand responded to this challenge by encouraging the independent bookseller. They regularly use their own social media presence to highlight events and promotions that bookstores

across Canada employ. Ampersand also makes sure that small bookstores receive just as much attention as the large chain stores in their selling season, and continue to visit every store they sell to in person at least once a year.

The D&M bankruptcy impacted Ampersand financially, but didn't deter them from continuing to support Canadian publishers. They continue to represent two of the three companies D&M split into, D&M and Harbour Publishing, and remained committed to representing Canadian books. They've also worked with publishers more than ever to increase sales. Ampersand uses their newsletter Ampersand INK, as well as the sales conferences, to create discussions with publishers about how to make each season better than the last.

Ampersand is a leader in the push for earlier buying dates. They are working with book fair organizers to push back dates, having meetings with publishers explaining in detail the steps that need to be taken for them to be in line with American buy dates, and making sure independent bookstores aren't lost in the transition. They understand that while it will be tricky to coordinate the new dates, the benefits in the long term will be worth the time and effort.

They have also become educators in the introduction of e-catalogues. Although many reps themselves prefer paper, they have accepted and integrated the new technology into their selling. In becoming early adopters they have placed themselves in a position where they can inform publishers on what they need, and what booksellers need, from online buying systems and e-catalogues. At the same time, they have recognized many of their buyers won't take to adopting this technology anytime soon, and continue to mail print catalogues and allow booksellers to order the way they're used to.

Potentials

In reviewing the past year of sales, Ampersand reps have found many new potentials for publishers and booksellers. Publishers should be placing more emphasis on Canadian authors and local awareness, and offering more creative marketing and publicity efforts. They should keep updated on national trends, as well as other publishers' book lists, to be able to fill holes in the market. They can maximize their list's

potential by presenting it well at sales conference. Booksellers should have their staff informed and excited, and increase visibility by purchasing less titles in larger quantities. Buyers should be aware of their sales histories, and not be afraid to take risks, using return policies as a safety net. A clear succession plan is also important to ensure the store's success for years to come.

The future in book sales will bring forth many new challenges and obstacles, but also opportunities and fresh ideas. As the market changes, sales reps must be able to adapt and stay one step ahead of trends in order to continue to add value to the publishing process. Working as the link between publishers and booksellers, sales reps are vital to every single book that is published and help not only in sales, but in helping the book find its intended audience. Ampersand has been at the cutting edge of these trends, helping direct publishers in changing sales markets and sales techniques.

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