

**THE NEW STAR PODCAST:
A Publicity Project**

AMY VAN WYK

PDMM, Rhodes University, 2013

B.A. (Hons.), Rhodes University, 2010

Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Publishing

in the

Publishing Program

Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology

© Amy Van Wyk 2016

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Summer 2016

Approval

Name: Amy Andrea van Wyk

Degree: Master of Publishing

Title: *The New Star Podcast: A Publicity Project*

John Maxwell
Senior Supervisor
Associate Professor
Publishing Program

Mauve Pagé
Supervisor
Lecturer
Publishing Program

Rolf Maurer
Industry Supervisor
Publisher
New Star Books, Vancouver BC

Date Approved: August 25, 2016

Abstract

In 2015 New Star Books—a small, Canadian press—created a podcast for the promotion of its authors. The *Happy Hour Symposia* aimed to promote authors and create intimacy, or a marketing connection with listeners. This report evaluates the progress of New Star’s strategy from initial goal setting to podcast production and distribution. The press and its authors may have enjoyed a short-lived success through the podcast, however future episodes will be sporadic and depend on the press’s decision to promote authors through the podcast. The report makes several suggestions pertaining to the improvement of the project and concludes that the podcast was a good publicity tool for its authors despite the press’s uncertainty of producing future episodes.

To Thomas Keegan Branson

For your unconditional love.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge, first and foremost, God Almighty for His grace. His purpose continues to unfold in my life, and I am deeply humbled and blessed by His unfailing love.

Special gratitude to my senior program supervisor John Maxwell for providing guidance at the outline stage, taking the time to read several drafts, and offering valuable insight in refining this paper. I would like to thank Mauve Pagé, my secondary supervisor for her feedback.

Thank you to New Star Books' publisher Rolf Maurer and managing editor Michael Leyne, for affording me the opportunity to become a four-month member of the team, supporting this project, and sharing their wisdom with me from longstanding and admirable careers.

To George Bowering, George Stanley, Julie Emerson, and Roxanna Bikadoroff: thank you for believing in this project and making time in your schedules to record the podcast sessions. Your dedication has been a valuable gift.

Thank you to the Vancouver Public Library for making the Inspiration Lab's recording facilities and equipment available to us.

I would like to thank the assistance of Thomas Branson, Michelle Balfour, Gail Bongalis, Sandra Ofori-Dei, and Sophie Pouyenne for their assistance and feedback in this paper.

Finally, thank you to my parents, both in Namibia and Canada, and once again to the love of my life for providing free therapy, love, and support.

Table of Contents

Approval	ii
Abstract	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Figures	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
1. NEW STAR BOOKS	5
1.1 Background	5
1.2 The Internship	7
1.2.1 Podcast Project — The Happy Hour Symposia.....	9
1.2.2 Production.....	10
1.2.3 Technical Details: Audacity	17
1.2.4 Distribution	20
1.2.5 Analytics	23
1.2.6 Publicity.....	27
2. ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	32
2.1 Achievements:.....	35
2.2 Challenges:	36
2.3 Recommendations:	38
3. CONCLUSION	41
4. REFERENCES	43

List of Figures

Figure 1: Books and Beans competition for <i>The World, I Guess</i> launch	8
Figure 2: One of the illustrations in <i>Twenty Seven Stings</i>	16
Figure 3: Editing the podcast recording in Audacity	18
Figure 4: Appearance and hosting of the podcast on the website using Blubrry	22
Figure 5: Podcast download tracking per episode on platforms	26
Figure 6: Google Analytics showing page views.....	27
Figure 7: Facebook promotion analytics	28
Figure 8: Twitter promotion analytics for HHS1	29
Figure 9: Low number of interaction for Penguin Podcast post on Facebook	34
Figure 10: Sales action on book's page could be placed on podcast blog.....	40

INTRODUCTION

“Podcasts offer an unprecedented opportunity to become intimate with your readers. It’s a theatre of the mind, and once you get into people’s minds, the sky is the limit. As a consequence of this intimacy, you establish trust, which in turn leads to loyalty.”

Anshuman Iddamsetty, art director and audiovisual producer at *Hazlitt* magazine

Anshuman Iddamsetty’s quote denotes that podcasts have a place in the publishing industry, because publishers—and more so, authors—value intimacy. Developing and maintaining a connection with their audience is one of the reason publishers have a marketing department. Rowland Lorimer (2012) speaks about interactivity with authors in the age of technology, and equally, in an age where much that is personal is public because of social media, the author stands to benefit by using the podcast as a forum to express themselves to an audience who would be interested in their work, as it is presented through the medium.¹ Consequently, although podcasts are a platform of interaction, their success is driven by a responsive social media presence.

Discoverability is essential in publishing, and authors need to create an audience. Podcasts now give publishers more opportunity to intimately engage with an audience and reach their desired target market with that same credibility as a trusted literary voice. Additionally, podcasting extends the hand of the publisher to reach, engage, and connect with audiences while simultaneously promoting their authors. As Iddamsetty (2015) points out, the podcast is able to create an experience for listeners to engage with the author, the voice, and the book in a way that furthers the listener’s experience.

The global audio sector is reportedly a \$65 billion industry, which includes broadcast radio, recorded music, on-demand streaming services, and podcasts.² Despite its

¹ Lorimer, R. *Ultra Libris*: 271

² Silverman ,D. and Parvizi, P. “The Future of Podcasting “

decade-long growth and foreseeable future development, podcasts are still not mass adopted products but can be considered one of the popular ways of reaching audiences and connecting with them through audio. Likewise, publishers produce and promote their podcasts with their established audiences, as well as develop new ones with the audio platform. Some of these audiences are people who commute, use public transport, or go on road trips. They enjoy listening to audio (such as podcasts and audiobooks) on the move, but they also enjoy it in the comfort of their homes while they cook or garden. More so, most avid podcast listeners access podcasts in their cars³.

A podcast is a digital audio product. It includes a series of audio programs delivered through a static URL containing an RSS (Real Simple Syndication) feed, which automatically updates a list of programs on the listener's device for downloading.⁴ The term is derived from the combination of its original platform, the iPod, and the verb "broadcast." Commonly, podcasts are distributed in the MP3 audio format, a compressed audio file for publishing and downloading. They can serve as self-produced publicity outlets, where the publisher promotes their brand, the author, and the title to a non-traditional audience.

A podcast episode is a single recorded session that can be played back by the listener. Podcast sessions can be recorded consecutively and can include spoken word, interviews, storytelling, and live music. Once a session has been recorded, it is saved and converted to a format that is easily downloadable by the audience for little or no cost. Episodes can be listened to online or offline after they are downloaded by the listener.

A podcast listener is someone who listens to a podcast. In the case of a publisher podcast, podcast listeners can be divided into readers and non-readers; the difference being readers are the audience who has purchased books published by the publisher, but for the most part, may not be aware of the publisher and their authors. Whereas many non-readers stumble upon podcasts, and thereby are informed of the publisher and its authors. If the listener would like to continue to be updated about future episodes, they can become a subscriber.

³ Washenko, A. "Canadian Podcast Listenership among Drivers Growing Gradually". A recent article in Rain News revealed that Canadian podcast listenership among drivers is gradually on the increase although home is still the preferred location for listening.

⁴ Mack, S. and Ratcliffe. *Podcasting Bible*.28

A subscriber becomes a follower of the podcast through an RSS feed that notifies them of newer episodes. RSS feeds are hosted by the publisher or a third-party website, and are important to the success of a podcast because they enable automatic notifications to listeners. They are also useful for the tracking of listeners and subscribers. By tracking listeners and subscribers, the publisher can analyze how many listeners are visiting the website through specific e-mail or newsletter links, social media, or third-party site links. According to Mack and Ratcliffe (2007), the RSS feed contains information about the podcast, and individual episodes in extensible mark-up language (XML) designed to store and communicate data using code.

This report reflects on my internship with Vancouver-based publisher New Star Books during the summer of 2015, specifically creating two podcast episodes with their authors George Bowering, George Stanley, Julie Emerson, and illustrator Roxanna Bikadoroff. The New Star podcast was a passion project to further author publicity and grow audience intimacy by inviting the listener into a “Happy Hour Symposium,” where authors discussed their books, the creative process, and themselves. Herein, the report describes the production, editing, distribution, and promotion processes of the podcast, and include further discussion of the lessons that evolved during the project, as well as opportunities that presented themselves regarding the improvement of podcast publicity strategies. The report also discusses the publisher’s operation structure and target audience, as well as providing an account of the production process and strategies employed to distribute the podcast.

In Section One, New Star Books and the *Happy Hour Symposia* podcast project are introduced. Phases of developing the podcast project with the press are presented, and aspects of production and distribution are explored by examining the measurement tools available to assess the effectiveness of the podcast in meeting the promotional goals of the press. I produced two podcast episodes, and in this discuss the details involving the production and distribution of each episode. Additionally, the report briefly introduces a future episode that the press was set to release but has been put on hold.

Section Two evaluates the lessons learned during and after the internship with New Star Books as it pertains to the podcast project. This chapter includes suggestions on how New Star can improve and further expand podcast production and promotion strategies. Finally, this report concludes that New Star will not aggressively pursue podcast

productions, but may continue using the podcast as a bonus to their overall marketing strategies, where needed.

This report covers the podcast project *The Happy Hour Symposia*, which was launched with New Star Books as a platform for author publicity. New Star boasts a respected list of authors in British Columbia and Canada. The project tested whether the medium could fit the press's overall publicity strategy for its authors. The report shows how the press produced, distributed, and promoted the podcast with its initial release. It evaluates achievements and challenges, and makes recommendations for future podcasts.

1. NEW STAR BOOKS

This section presents a brief background to New Star Books. It includes the internship experience and the podcast project for the press, *The Happy Hour Symposia*, which involves the production of each recorded session and the reasoning behind distribution options for the podcast. During the four-month internship, in collaboration with the publisher and managing editor, I produced two episodes involving two authors for each episode, within two weeks. The press continued to improve distribution options after my internship. New Star's goal for the podcast was to promote its authors to a market that was receptive to their work using audio. Although they see the promise of the podcast in serving as a bonus to their promotions model for its authors, they stopped recording more episodes because of various reasons discussed in this paper. Unfortunately, New Star does not have the resources to adhere to a podcast production schedule. The timing (and existence) of future episodes will depend wholly on the willingness and availability of the authors as well as the resources of the New Star staff. In the words of the managing editor, New Star considers the podcast a "cool and fun bonus weapon in [their] marketing arsenal" and hopes to release episodes a couple of times a year, but the podcast will not be a central part of the press's overall plans.

1.1 Background

New Star Books, formerly known as Vancouver Community Press, began as the brainchild of former editors and writers of *The Georgia Straight* in the early 1970s, stemming from a book-publishing project within *The Georgia Straight Writers Series*. By 1974, the press shifted its editorial focus to non-fiction titles about current affairs and politics. The name New Star Books originated from a collection of the press's titles, recounting the Cultural Revolution in Mao Zedong's China. The name change initiated an editorial shift from strictly literary work towards non-fiction, predominately left-wing

political titles. By 1990, Rolf Maurer assumed the role of publisher of New Star and rekindled the press's literary mandate by including works of poetry, prose fiction, and non-fiction alongside its political, social, and historical publications. Additionally, New Star often includes books about the environment and nature under the imprint Transmontanus, which focuses on local issues in often-overlooked regions or aspects of British Columbia. These can be of a social, cultural, and environmental nature, according to managing editor Michael Leyne. Some books under the Transmontanus imprint are *Wreck Beach* (2007) by Carellin Brooks, *Kokanee* (2002) by Don Gayton, and *Clam Gardens* (2006) by Judith Williams.

New Star boasts 114 titles in print, and keeps roughly a third of their book inventory at their Vancouver office, with another 45% at their warehouse in Burnaby. The remaining 20% goes to a distributor in Ontario. The press distributes some e-books via Kobo and Shelfie (formerly BitLit), as well as to libraries through EBSCO Host.

The range of New Star's list allows it to feature in literary circles, with titles such as *Debbie: An Epic* by Lisa Robertson, *Burning Water* by George Bowering, and *After Desire* by George Stanley, as well as in political circles, with titles such as *Rebel Life* by Mark Leier and *Mac-Pap: A Memoir of a Canadian in the Spanish Civil War* by Ronald Liversedge. The press commonly sends copies to literature reviewers such as *BC Bookworld*, *Publishers Weekly* and, on occasion, the *Globe and Mail*. Additionally, New Star regularly provides titles to course instructors in English, sociology, history, and other departments at various Canadian and American universities, who purchase New Star's books through their distributor. In addition to college and university students, the press's audience is generally well educated, outside of the cultural mainstream, and politically progressive.

The press consists of publisher Rolf Maurer and managing editor Michael Leyne. The press occasionally employs university interns and freelancers for design, editing, and so forth. Maurer's role as publisher involves administering the finances of the press, receiving and editing manuscripts with Leyne, and closely communicating with authors on royalties and editorial issues. Additionally, Maurer represents New Star by attending important publishing and small press festivals and events, such as WORD Vancouver and the Cascadia Poetry Festival in Nanaimo, British Columbia.

Leyne's role as managing editor include but are not limited to cataloguing and checking inventory, overseeing marketing strategies by finding literary reviewers for the

titles, updating the website and blogs, using social media, and designing flyers to be mailed to customers. Furthermore, Leyne copy-edits and proofreads accepted manuscripts, administers the design of books by outsourcing designers, and liaises with distributors, booksellers, and publishing associations.

New Star receives funding from the Canada Council for the Arts (CCA) and the British Columbia Arts Council (BCAC). According to Leyne, the Canada Book Fund (CBF) and the BC Book Publishing Tax Credit also assist the press in funding and tax breaks. Funding from these sources makes up about half of the press's budget, with the other half coming from sales.

New Star's acquisitions protocol allows for unsolicited manuscripts to be sent to the press, and both Maurer and Leyne give these six to eight weeks of scrutiny before they are accepted or rejected. Careful consideration is given to whether the unsolicited manuscript fits New Star's editorial mandate and how much additional work is required to match the press's standard for publishing.

The press's decision to incorporate the podcast was to expand its marketing plan for the exposure of its authors and to find out how it might fit into the overall framework of the press. Producing two pilot episodes was the trial to evaluate whether the press could fully incorporate the podcast as an integral part of its marketing plan. New Star Books foresaw future episodes involved in their greater marketing plan but could not realise the prospect of these arrangements due to lack of resources and time needed to invest in a full-scale podcast project.

1.2 The Internship

In the summer of 2015, I served as the marketing and sales intern for New Star Books. I assisted Leyne with pitching books to potential reviewers; updating the website and blog posts; promoting author readings, reviews, and books on social media platforms; shipping books with promotional flyers to customers; liaising with the outsourced distributor; checking inventory; and updating the authors and contacts database for the press. In addition to the in-house operations, I had the opportunity to correspond with

authors and interact with distributors, sales representatives, bookstores, and literature publications.

As the marketing intern, I assisted Leyne in organising the book launch of George Bowering's *The World, I Guess* at a coffee shop close to the office. Prior to this, I proposed we run a three-day competition, "Books and Beans" (Figure 1), for the book on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. We wanted to create a buzz around the book and the launch by having users share pictures of a book they were reading together with their coffee, and having them tag their friends to do the same, to stand a chance to win *The World, I Guess*.

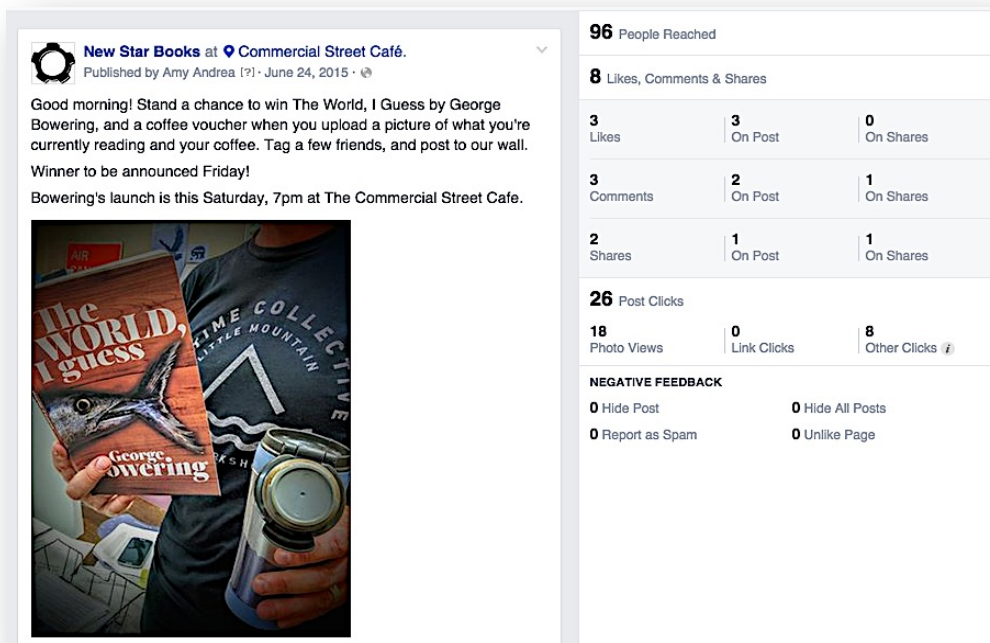


Figure 1: Books and Beans competition for *The World, I Guess* launch

Additionally, I pitched newly released and forthcoming titles, such as *The World, I Guess* (Spring 2015) by George Bowering and *Twenty Seven Stings* (Fall 2015) by Julie Emerson, to the CBC's literary shows, to several literary publications such as *Publishers Weekly* and *The Capilano Review*, to newspapers like the *Vancouver Sun*, to literary reviews and critiques, to literary festivals such as WORD Vancouver for readings and appearances.

There were several motivations that led to the idea of creating a promotional podcast for New Star. First, Maurer expressed using new media, such as YouTube, to promote author titles seemed efforts in vain for the press. Yet, he was willing to see how

podcasting could affect the press's profit margins in particular. Second, at the time of my internship, there were not many publishers and presses in Vancouver who were podcasting. This encouraged me to initiate the podcast project in order to position the press as a leader in using the medium as a promotional tool. Third, at New Star we often listened to CBC radio's *The Next Chapter* hosted by Shelagh Rogers, and I started listening to the Penguin Podcast. We all enjoyed the authors who appeared on these shows to promote their books and share their insights about who they are as ordinary people. Fourth, friends who were also listening to podcasts enjoyed the stories provided through the medium. Fifth, overseeing inventory during the internship encouraged me to think of a way to assist in the exposure and promotion of the authors, titles, and to think of how their varied and unique content, which is often specific to British Columbia and Canada, was perfect for podcasting. And sixth, attending several sessions of the Lunch Poems series hosted at Simon Fraser University's downtown campus that featured New Star poets among others, as well as book launches by New Star authors at other venues such as Pulp Fiction Books, further fuelled the idea of creating a podcast for the press that would focus on the author and their works. However, rather than audiences being physically present at readings and launches, these events would come to listeners in the comfort of their homes or on the move, on demand — through the podcast.

1.2.1 Podcast Project — The Happy Hour Symposia

"The concept is simple. We take a couple of interesting and talented writers and lock them in a room with a live mic and some drinks."

Michael Leyne, New Star Books Happy Hour Symposium #1

The Happy Hour Symposia is a podcast consisting of two episodes for the press in August 2015. It involves two authors in each episode, in conversation with each other about themselves, the creative process and concept of their books, literature in general, and aspects of their lives the readers might not have been familiar with. It is aimed at being an intimate affair with participants in a casual setting. In the following sub-sections, I describe details of the podcast project, including the production, distribution and marketing processes.

We worked closely with the authors to develop the best concept for each session, and allowed them creative freedom during production. Maurer came up with the name for the podcast, *The Happy Hour Symposia*, alluding to the casual nature for the podcast and the discussions between authors. Furthermore, the nature of *The Happy Hour Symposia* podcast is similar to the nature of the small press, which aims to offer left-wing cultural content without trying too hard, while simultaneously drawing attention to the objectives of the press in facilitating and publishing books of critical cultural content.

The nature of the Internet calls for more transparency, and with that, an invisible intimacy develops between transmitters and receivers in the network. Traditionally, publishers relied on reviews and advertising in newspapers and magazines to foster a connection with audiences; many still do, but a podcast can enhance this sense of intimacy at minimal cost to the press and with added creative freedom. This is what we wanted to experiment with when we created *The Happy Hour Symposia*.

Intimacy is considered to be synonymous with podcasting. Several successful podcasters, such as Alex Blumberg, say that intimacy on a podcast surpasses that of most other media because the podcast lends itself to private listening, and allows listeners to “form this picture of what they’re listening to.”⁵ This intimacy also comes with listeners inviting the author into their personal space when they listen to the podcast on their headphones, in their cars, or at home. Additionally, intimacy can also result from the authors talking to each other, forgetting there is an audience listening, and can thereby be more authentic in return. By this extension, listeners are able to interact with New Star’s authors in a way that gives them an avenue to explore their personalities through their voices and their stories, without the need to attend author readings and the like. The intimacy experienced in a podcast can be likened to that of an author reading or symposia.

1.2.2 Production

Author Selection:

The New Star podcast project was pitched to Maurer and Leyne with specific authors in mind. These authors were selected based on the most recent releases of the

⁵ Greiff, F. “Podcasts Seem to Show Audience Engagement that Other Media would Envy”
<http://adage.com/article/internet-week-new-york/golden-age-podcasts-audience-engagement-king/298708/>

press, spanning over three seasons. The authors originally selected and invited were George Bowering, George Stanley, Julie Emerson, illustrator Roxanna Bikadoroff, Andrew Struthers, Donato Mancini, Louis Cabri, and lastly, Marie Annharte Baker, who recently won the inaugural Blue Metropolis First People's Literature Prize. Although each author had something unique to contribute to the podcast, only Bowering, Stanley, Emerson and Bikadoroff were recorded as part of the podcast project.

In Spring 2015, Canada's first Poet Laureate, George Bowering, had just released *The World, I Guess*, and Julie Emerson was due to release *Twenty Seven Stings* with illustrations by the renowned Roxanna Bikadoroff in the fall (on Remembrance Day).

Bowering is a writer and poet, and he suffered a heart attack prior to releasing *The World, I Guess*. Besides being one of the most celebrated authors in Canadian literature and Canada's first poet laureate, the incident took place a few months prior to recording, and his latest book set for release made him the perfect candidate for New Star's first podcast episode. George Stanley, a long-time friend of Bowering, is a California-born Canadian poet who moved to Vancouver in the 1970s and taught English and Literature at North West Community College (then Capilano College). He is also served as, a member of the editorial board of *The Capilano Review*. Beyond being successful poets, Bowering and Stanley are both household names in the publishing industry, and they already have a loyal following that could be drawn to the podcast.

Julie Emerson is an artist and writer. Although *Twenty Seven Stings* (2015) is her first book with New Star, she wrote *The Herons of Stanley Park* (2013) in collaboration with photographer Martin Passchler. New Star hired Roxanna Bikadoroff to create the illustrations for Emerson's book. Bikadoroff's work has been featured in *The Walrus*, *The New Yorker*, and other international publications. She has also produced illustrations for Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* (Penguin, 1986) and *Heroes and Villains* (Penguin, 1991). Having Emerson feature on the podcast to promote her book that was set for release team up with the celebrated illustrator Roxana Bikadoroff was a test of the merits of audio in describing visuals to the listener. Together, they could produce a podcast that would appeal to a creative and philosophical audience who also have an interest in history and art.

From New Star's perspective, choosing the four authors was about marketing them to people receptive to their work. The authors, although very well known in some literary

circles, do not have much of a social media presence. Promoting the podcast on social media sites, such as Facebook, was essentially an attempt at broadening their celebrity status by having readers and listeners share some sort of interaction with the authors, even if for the first time.

The format chosen for the New Star podcast episodes differed from most literary podcasts by having authors converse with each other rather than having a host interview the authors. Other formats of podcast episodes can be recorded to include monologues where only one person speaks to the listener at a time. Another format is dialogue, where two or more people share a conversation, usually as an interview, where the host interviews the guest(s). Some podcasts, as in the case of the New Star episodes, may only include hosts at the introduction and conclusion of the episode, often switching over to a pre-recorded session wherein the guests speak to each other or the listener and not to the host. This format was chosen for the episodes to remove the dependency in having a host, and would only contain the authors having a conversation with each other. The introduction welcomes the listener to the inaugural New Star podcast, and provides them with a brief summary. This episode format was not unchangeable, as authors were free to collaborate with each other, or choose to feature in a recording session alone, as in the case of Struthers.

Although New Star guided the content of the podcast by informing authors of the nature of the podcast, authors were at liberty to discuss freely amongst themselves without a script. Content was aimed at including the author's background, the book, the creative process, and general interests. These details encouraged greater intimacy between the authors with the listener.

Recording:

When the selection of the initial four authors was made, with input on the choices from Maurer, the authors were contacted and the idea was pitched to them in a formal e-mail. The pitch for the podcast project included the aim of the podcast, and expanded on distribution options and other podcast hosting sites to inform the authors of the kind of publicity agreement they would enter into in terms of promoting their titles and their author brands.

Once we had the authors on board, we considered recording options and obtained the equipment necessary to carry out the project. Although New Star already had a

microphone in its possession, we were not comfortable with recording the first episode at the press's offices due to intermittent noise disruptions, such as a ringing telephone. With some research, we found the Vancouver Public Library's (VPL) Inspiration Labs to be the perfect setting for the production of the podcast.

The Inspiration Labs are open to the public and are free to use. The labs consist of recording booths ranging from those that can accommodate larger groups and video production, to smaller booths with one or two microphones. Depending on production purposes, the booths or stations are fully equipped with high quality recording equipment such as a computer, Behringer mixer, microphones and headphones. Other equipment can also be booked according to project needs, such as a pocket camera, a green screen and a light kit. Additionally, various recording and editing software, such as Audacity, is available from the library's computers.

Recording of the introductions was done at the New Star office, after hours. This provided the convenience of mobility, but may have impacted the sound quality of the episodes during file transitioning. We decided to record the introduction after the production of the first episode to summarise the important points from the session.

The Happy Hour Symposium #1: George Bowering and George Stanley

August 21, 2015: Described as being a lively and engaging conversation by Leyne, Bowering and Stanley recorded New Star's inaugural episode. The session went over just one hour (1:01:08), and Leyne and myself accompanied the authors into the booth for set up and sat through the first half of the recording, trying to be as quiet as possible.

In advance of the recording date, we arranged a time to meet with the authors at the Inspiration Labs to schedule the session. Looking at the library's time slot availability, the authors were presented with optional dates for recording. The library sent an online booking confirmation that was forwarded to the authors.

On the day of the first podcast episode, the two authors were met inside the Vancouver Public Library and were taken to set up in the Inspiration Labs. The authors were briefed again about the procedure and the amount of time at their disposal. Using an instruction manual for technical set up, we were soon ready for recording.

During the recording session, the authors spoke at leisure with each other, as though they were in a coffee shop or bar. They took a break 45 minutes into the recording

and then continued for an additional 15 minutes. Bowering and Stanley's recording was unstructured, and both authors could speak freely for as long as they liked about several subjects, including insights into the literary dynamics of poets and poetry. During the podcast episode they often alluded to other reputed poets who shared their claims about North American poets, as well as Cascadian poetry and the role of the muse. They each read a few excerpts from their books of poetry, *The World, I Guess* and *After Desire*. This episode also revealed several literary achievement biographies of the authors, giving the listener a greater appreciation of Canadian literature and publishing.

After recording, the session was saved on a USB flash drive and taken back to the office for editing. Initially, with the authors speaking for more than one hour, the thought was to edit the recording to make it shorter. However, the decision was made to leave the session content as is, and edit unnecessary stalls in conversations, dead sound, and throat clearing instead. The belief was that minimal editing would have created a more authentic feel.

After the first author's session was completed, and once we were able to understand and summarize the content of the recording session, the introduction was recorded, and I installed Audacity on a personal laptop to listen to and edit recordings at home, where I merged the recorded files into a polished podcast episode.

The result of the episode was satisfactory, but considering the length of the session during playback, and after uploading, I would have chosen a shorter duration. Most of the podcast episodes I have listened to, including those of Penguin, lasted an average of twenty minutes. Despite the listener experiencing a good hour's intimacy with the author, a shorter episode might not only respect the time the listener took to listen to the episode but also be more concise and valuable. A shorter time limit on an episode could potentially amount to a higher number of listens and downloads. However, as an inaugural podcast, the clout of the authors and the wealth of content were suitable to keep most of the original session, which amounted to an hour of recording time.

The Happy Hour Symposium #2: Julie Emerson and Roxanna Bikadoroff

August 27, 2015: Emerson and Bikadoroff's podcast recording session lasted just over half an hour (30:38) and took place shortly after Bowering and Stanley's session. This

time, I met with the authors on my own. The poet and the illustrator had prepared notes for themselves for guidance, an option that was outlined in the pitch email I had sent in an effort to help the participants map out the content of the conversation. They also had the option of speaking free-range and unscripted, as Bowering and Stanley did. These two interview formats aimed to give the participants flexibility in deciding how they would like to dictate their conversation and the contents thereof.

Although Emerson and Bikadoroff had a script, conversation flowed naturally between the two. Having a script to guide the conversation offered structure to the session; the participants knew what to expect in terms of questions and how to answer them succinctly. Where they might have wandered off, they easily referred back to the script.

The participants spoke about the written and visual aspects of the book, the creative process, and their inspirations. Their conversation also included Emerson's research into the subject of wars across different cultures over the centuries, ranging from Chinese culture in the sixth century BCE, to classical Greek and Persian culture with Alexander the Great, to war in colonial Angola, to the beginning of the Hundred Years War in Europe, right up to drone warfare, to name a few. Bikadoroff spoke about her inspirations for creating the artwork for the book. The session ended with a reading of Emerson's poem "Straw Men" in *Twenty Seven Stings* (2015).



Figure 2: One of the illustrations in *Twenty Seven Stings*

As was done in the first session, the second recording was saved on a USB flash drive for editing. The second session was edited extensively. There was a sound level difference between the two participants because of the volume of their voices. Initially, the participants had two microphones, but we opted for one microphone due to technical difficulties in getting the one microphone to the correct level. The remaining two-way microphone was turned up at equal volume. Listening to the recording during editing showed a discrepancy: one voice was louder than the other. Adjusting the acoustic settings, such as normalisation and equalisation in Audacity to level the audio setting of the recorded session, helped improve the sound in the recording file. Unnecessary sounds such as dead sound, lip smacking, and page turns were edited out. Some of the noises that could not be edited out were hidden by fading out mistakes and fading in music. I inserted a jingle file for the podcast. My partner produced the jingle by strumming a few notes on his guitar.

For this second episode, the introduction was recorded at home without an external microphone, only the internal microphone of a computer. There is, however, a room acoustics change, known as environmental noise,⁶ when the introduction switches over to the participants in the studio, because of merging two separate files into one episode. The participants received the edited version of the recording and gave their feedback, including several concerns with the recording, via email. This was quickly corrected with more editing and was finally approved by the participants for distribution.

Having listened to the first episode since uploading, a shorter duration might have made the episode stronger and more concise. Initially, the longer format was chosen to facilitate an in-depth discussion between the two participants. However, the podcast might have not have kept the listener's full attention until the end because of the length of the episode.

The first episode placed more emphasis on the literary careers and insights of one of Canada's most respected writers. Although the second episode had the same interview format as the first episode, the interview was strongly focused on the book. Unique in their own respects, the episodes aimed to bring these insights to the listener, giving them a deeper sense of connection with these New Star authors.

1.2.3 Technical Details: Audacity

The objective of the editing process is to produce a marketable and presentable finished product to the listening audience. By reviewing the recording and identifying the rapid changes in sound waves, it is easy to identify where the participants made unwanted sounds, such as clearing their throats or stuttering.

The podcast producer or editor gets to look at these aspects of recording in more detail and makes the appropriate changes with a software program such as Audacity. Figure 3 is a screenshot showing an example of the editing interface in Audacity with the highlighted section in the display window indicating a section in the recording that can be deleted or softened using the noise reduction function. Noise reduction, which can be found under the Edit section of the toolbar, allows for unwanted background noises such as

⁶ Herrington, Jack *Podcasting Hacks*, 95

bumps, coughs, and so forth to be completely eliminated from the recording. To add jingles and sound effects, the user can insert these files into the same or different tracks inside the display window. This makes it possible for the editor to save a single, compressed copy of the file containing the added files. To easily identify different sound files, it is recommended to import files into separate tracks. The editor/producer is also able to easily identify different sound files from each other and scrutinise them closely by highlighting a specific area for editing.

The technical aspect of the process forms a crucial part of the podcast project, and the podcast producer should be able to maintain the crux of the content and have it achieve the objectives of the project as a whole when editing. With the difficulty in maintaining perfection aside, some natural human aspects could remain in the recording for a more authentic feel. However, unwanted and unedited sounds in the recording may cause the project to come across as unprofessional; it is the producer's role to find an adequate balance between the two.

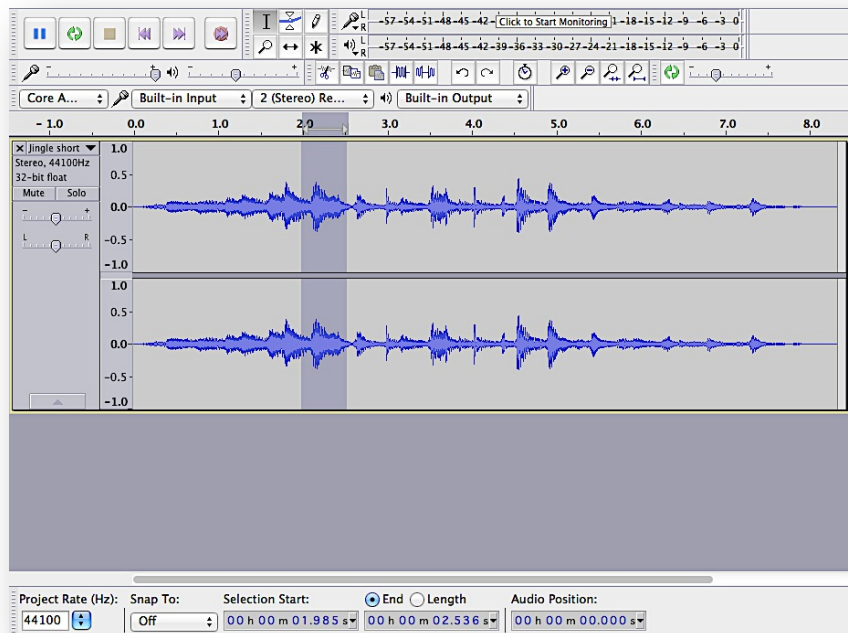


Figure 3: Editing the podcast recording in Audacity

Formatting or encoding the audio file to a user-friendly format such as MP3 is an important part when uploading recordings to hosting platforms. Audacity exports files in the WAV format, which is typically too big for podcast hosting sites that only allow compressed MP3 or MP4 files, both of which are easily shareable and compatible with most devices. The compressed file format allows for shorter downloading times by the user. Converting WAV to MP3 can be done using the Audacity plugin or online audio converters⁷, some of which are free to download. Initially the first episode was uploaded to SoundCloud and Apple as is (WAV), but through Leyne's advice, was converted to MP3 for lesser downloading time by the user.

Audacity is a free production and editing software that is user-friendly for podcast producers in guaranteeing an efficient production and editing process. The library's labs provide a brief instruction manual, making it easier to understand the equipment, but learning first-hand what each basic function contains might be the best way to understand how to use Audacity. The graphic user interface (GUI) of Audacity is the front end of the program that the producer/editor uses to make applied changes to the recording. The top left corner comprises the production buttons: Pause, Repeat, Stop, Rewind, Fast-forward, and Record. In recording the first track, which is the space where the sound waves flow, the Record, Pause, and Stop buttons are the primary functions. Thereafter, playback lets one listen to the recording after it has been stopped.

During this stage, the producer is able to discern unwanted audio content by using the Cursor button next to the Record button to highlight the affected area, and clicking on the Scissor tool to cut it out. Next to the Scissor tool, there is Copy and Paste buttons, Combine and Separate Sound Wave buttons, and Undo and Redo buttons. Each space where the sound waves appear is called a track, and the producer can insert pre-recorded and saved files into multiple tracks to suit the production content. This allows a producer to zoom in and out of tracks, as well as shift them into time slots where appropriate. To ensure files do not overlap one another, the producer has to cut and shift certain waves to their appropriate position so that content flows naturally without overlap or dead space.

For the episodes, I inserted a pre-recorded file of a jingle into one of the track spaces and moved the introduction to a different timeslot. Thereafter, I inserted another

⁷ Online audio converter: <http://media.io/>

jingle, which is followed by the authors' session, to create a natural flow from the one file to the next. The Fade In and Fade Out button is found with other functions under the Edit tab in the left-hand corner, to accompany the transition in the recording. To completely remove background noise, the Noise Reduction function under the Effects tab was used. Other functions include microphone volume, speaker volume, and monochrome or stereo input. Advanced sound engineering skills are not necessary to operate the sound equipment at the library, as an instruction manual is available for set up and a staff member is on hand to assist. I would recommend that the producer tests these functions prior to recording in order to familiarise themselves with these functions of the program's GUI for a smooth production process.

Iddamsetty (2015) speaks about the podcast as a theatre of the mind that uses sound effects, music, and even dead sound to create an experience for the listener⁸. In this way, I have used a jingle at the beginning of the episode to set the mood for the podcast episodes. In addition, I also used the jingle as a transition tool from one conversation topic to the next. To incorporate the jingle mid-episode, the Fade function in Audacity was used to fade in and fade out of the recording and jingle. Here, I used the entire jingle, which was a short recording of a few notes strummed on a guitar. The fade in and fade out of the jingle was used to invoke a sense of relaxation in the listener, so that they can feel at ease and enjoy the conversation in *The Happy Hour Symposium*. I used the jingle, instead of also using various sound bites for the transitions, because I wanted the listeners to become familiar with the one sound of the press's podcast, thereby creating intimacy with a familiar and consistent jingle.

1.2.4 Distribution

This section describes the distribution of the podcast to New Star's current and future audiences through social media platforms, iTunes, SoundCloud, and also through the press's website using a PowerPress plugin, Blubrry.

Blubrry: New Star initially used SoundCloud as a hosting platform, but in September 2015 the press started hosting the podcast on its own website using the Blubrry

⁸ Iddamsetty ibid.

PowerPress plugin, which is a WordPress plugin used to publish and distribute podcasts from a WordPress website.⁹ It comes with features such as unlimited bandwidth, premium statistics, and 100MB storage, among other packages. The Blubrry workflow is user-friendly and available for podcasters at \$12 per month for the small package, whereas SoundCloud charged \$20 per month. The plugin ensured that New Star was able to host the podcast on its own server without relying on SoundCloud or other third-party websites. SoundCloud was not an effective platform to attract listeners, as the press did not receive much traction on this platform. The reason for this lack of interaction is largely unknown, but it was speculated that New Star listeners were not SoundCloud users.


The Blubrry plugin enabled distribution from a blog platform without the need to use third-party websites, giving the press a greater sense of ownership of their content distributed from their own website. The Blubrry package plan gave the press the advantage of tracking podcast statistics to evaluate the performance and sharing reach of episodes in the market. An additional feature of Blubrry PowerPress allowed the press to set up an RSS feed to notify subscribers about the episode and promote it on Facebook, Twitter, and iTunes.

⁹Blubrry: <http://create.blubrry.com/resources/podcast-media-hosting/>

NEW STAR BLOGS

PODCAST: Happy Hour Symposium #2: Julie Emerson & Roxanna Bikadoroff


BY NEW STAR BOOKS | SEPTEMBER 29, 2015



We're delighted to share with you the second episode of the **Happy Hour Symposia**, our new podcast series.

In this episode **Julie Emerson**, author of *Twenty Seven Stings*, and **Roxanna Bikadoroff**, its illustrator, discuss the book, their respective creative processes, and the role of mythology in poetry and art.

You can listen below, download the mp3 for later, or listen on **SoundCloud** or **iTunes**.

 **Podcast: Play in new window | Download (Duration: 30:38 – 28.6MB)**

Subscribe: iTunes | Android | RSS

Again, many thanks to the exceedingly helpful gang at the Vancouver Public Library's Inspiration Lab.
 Previous episodes: HHS #1, ft. **George Bowering** and **George Stanley**

[Share](#) [Tweet](#) [Email](#) [Share This](#) [Like](#) [+1](#)

Figure 4: Appearance and hosting of the podcast on the website using Blubrry

Besides it being a podcast distributor tool, Blubrry offers analytics with the small package, giving the press the opportunity to evaluate the podcast episode's performance. Blubrry is a versatile software that provides tracking statistics the same way PodTrac¹⁰ did, but also facilitates podcast production and hosting. More so, Blubrry offered the press with more reliable statistics: these analytics include downloads, a metric that web analytics cannot measure. Web analytics largely measure page visits, visitor ID and duration. These figures also reveal which platforms and devices visitors used to access New Star's website

¹⁰ The press initially used PodTrac, a podcast analytics service, which according to Leyne, offered decent analytics for free. However, they abandoned this service after discovering Blubrry's better analytic features.

for the podcast.

iTunes: For the podcast to be distributed with iTunes, we needed to provide the SoundCloud URL for an RSS feed and the accompanying podcast metadata about the author, music rights information, length of recording, production information of the podcast, genre, subject matter, and tags. When the press switched hosting to their website instead of SoundCloud, they also needed to provide the website's URL for an RSS feed to iTunes.

As a podcast platform, iTunes disseminates the RSS feeds describing the podcasts and allows people to download them from wherever they are hosted, such as the press's website. After submitting the first podcast episode to iTunes, it can take up to a week before a notification is received that the podcast meets the RSS feed and metadata standards of Apple. However, we received the notification within one day.

Metadata assists in the search discoverability of the podcast online. Keywords are entered that would make the discoverability easier for users. The metadata includes information such as the artist name, the duration of the recording, the genre, and additional information such as a music source. In the tags section, keywords were entered that related to the nature or content of the podcast so that users are able to find it when they type in these words and related fields such as "publishing," "podcast," and "literature." This metadata information is aimed at attracting audiences who read and who listen to podcasts. Doing this may increase the chances of the user being directed to the publisher's website and the podcast. In this regard, metadata was used as a marketing tool to expand and ensure online presence for discoverability in search engine optimisation at no cost. An RSS feed is described with XML code, which contains the metadata "tags" describing the podcast. Knowledge of coding is not necessary, as the code is already within the RSS feed provided by podcasting hosts, such as Apple.

We continuously researched and experimented with these platforms to find the most cost effective way of distributing the podcast that would also drive traffic to the New Star's website. Deciding on the best distribution option was a 'learn as we go' process, one which ultimately concluded with distributing the podcast from the website.

1.2.5 Analytics

New Star Books has been able to measure the influence of the podcast in terms of

downloads and page visits. According to analytics expert Marshall Sponder (2012), measuring influence is relative and contextual, which means that the assessment of data could have different outcomes for different businesses depending on their respective aims.¹¹ By this extension, it would mean that the press is able to derive several kinds of meanings from the analytics that is presented to them. They are able to decide whether the podcast has fulfilled its publicity goals by interpreting the data. Considering the numbers represented by the analytics from the web, social media, and the newsletter campaigns for the podcast, some analysts might regard the results unappealing. In the context of the project, the small size of New Star's existent small following on several platforms, and the time frame in which the project was launched and promoted, the analytics proved to be reasonable in terms of measuring reach and downloads. For Facebook, 381 people like the press, and on Twitter over one thousand eight hundred people follow the press. These numbers can be considered small in comparison to another small press in Vancouver; for example, Anvil Press has 721 likes on Facebook and over five thousand followers on Twitter. This comparison, however, does not justify the success of each press, because the latter might have a bigger staff that is dedicated to social media marketing.

According to Leyne, who provided the statistics, New Star used the podcast performance tracker PodTrac earlier in the project, to inform the press of unique downloads and the source or location of these downloads. As far as podcast analytics were concerned, PodTrac recorded thirty-nine unique downloads of HHS1 and twenty-one unique downloads of HHS2. In total, sixteen of these were from iTunes and forty-four from "other sources," such as the press's website. Switching from PodTrac to Blubrry produced different measuring results, narrowing it down to specific devices from whence the downloading occurred.

Of the aggregate total (124), Blubrry shows that twenty-four downloads occurred through iTunes and sixteen from mobile; the remaining eighty-four downloads came from desktops. Leyne determined that the discrepancy in numbers was due to a delay in setting up the PodTrac tracking for HHS2. However, PodTrac missed a few downloads of HHS1, which suggested that the software may be faulty. He recommended scrapping PodTrac entirely, as it was less accurate and not as effective as Blubrry tracking. New Star can also

¹¹ Ibid, 127

deduce that the unusually high number of unique visits could be coming from expanded audiences that are not familiar with the press.

New Star initially used Podtrac to assess the podcast's performance from the press's website before they used Blubrry. According to Leyne's research on tracking, there is no way to get completely accurate numbers across all platforms, including with website analytics. Podtrac, however, was free and fairly easy to use, and gave the press a sense of relative popularity. The main advantages of Podtrac is that it counts iTunes downloads, as well as plays from the New Star website. However, the press no longer used Podtrac because of cases of inaccuracy.

New Star then used Blubrry to distribute the podcast and for analytics to measure download tracking. It showed sixty-one downloads of HHS1, of which forty-three were unique visitors, and sixty-three of HHS2, of which forty-four were unique visitors. Unique numbers are indicative of downloads made by visitors who had never visited the press's website before.

Although the press initially used Podtrac and then Blubrry for analytics, these tools did not measure website visits or page views. Therefore, Google Analytics was also used; it showed 102 page views for HHS1, with an average page view time of 4:43. HHS2 measured 120 page views, ninety-one of these being unique visits, with an average page view time of 4:14. Leyne considered this a very high average time to read a very short post, so it was safe to assume that some people were listening in the browser.

The figures below show how the various metric platforms assisted New Star in effectively tracking the podcast's progress. Blubrry has proven to be the better option for the press in managing this process. Equally, using Google Analytics has given the press perspective on how users have accessed its website through the various podcast promotion avenues employed during the project.

As Spender (2012) pointed out, the interpretation of the data analyzed by the press is subjective, and the success of these numbers is determined by how the press viewed the effectiveness of the podcast in terms of reach, interaction, and even sales. Using different measuring software can also affect what data is presented, and the interpretation thereof. PodTrac presented limited information in terms of source specificity with downloads, whereas Blubrry could not track how users came to the knowledge of the podcast. The press

therefore still had to consult Google analytics for this information, which altogether could affect how the initial data presented by PodTrac and Blubbry was interpreted. Having one analytics platform that is able to present detailed information would be ideal. However, having tested several measuring tools could present a more expansive and qualitative view of how data is presented and interpreted. It may be difficult to merge the data cohesively and interpret its meaning because of the various measurements. Furthermore, time plays a role in what data is presented. Information such as when downloads took place could inform the press of peak listening times and therefore inform the decision to release podcast updates accordingly. The figure below shows the cumulative downloads through analytics presented by SoundCloud, PodTrac and Blubbry. The figure shows that the podcast episodes were listened to a fairly good amount of people.

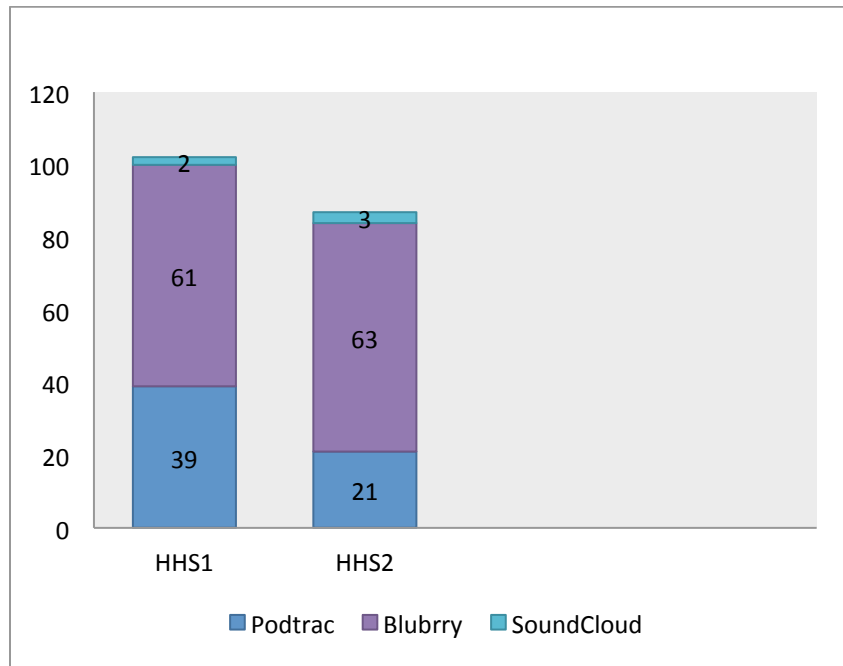


Figure 5: Cumulative podcast download tracking per episode on platforms

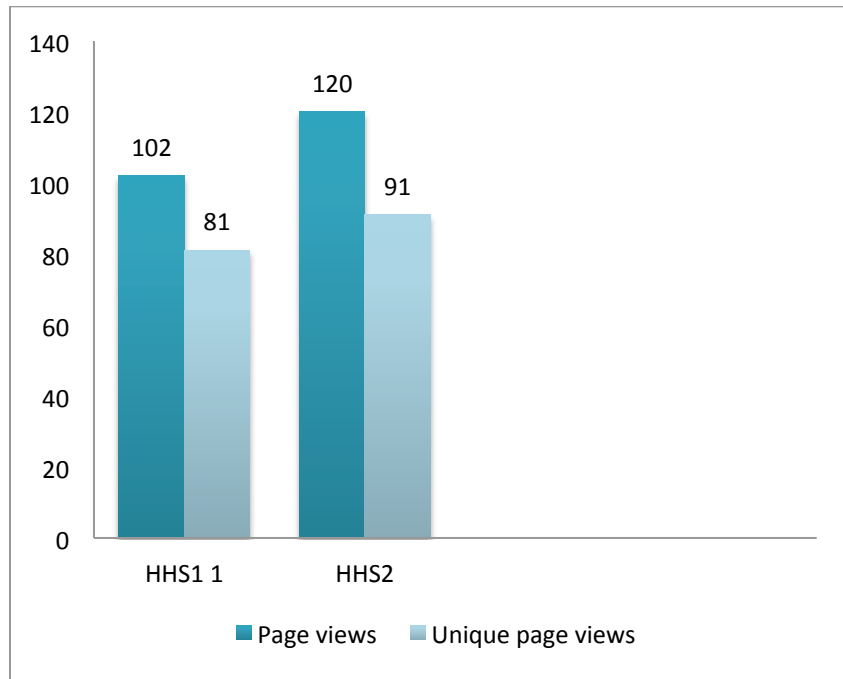


Figure 6: Google Analytics showing page views

1.2.6 Publicity

We used social media, the press’s blog, and the press’s newsletter to promote the podcast. Links were posted on Facebook and Twitter to drive users to the podcast. Below is a brief outline of the results of our promotion efforts as shown by Facebook and Twitter statistics, as well as the newsletter. By looking at these numbers, the promotions campaign can be measured to determine author exposure and audience reach through these means. The newsletter is the most direct contact the press has with its subscribed audience and is the best form of promotion for the podcast in this project. Furthermore, the press’s decision to include the podcast as a promotion or publicity extension for its authors showcases their desire to give exposure to the author’s name beyond traditional marketing methods.

The promotion efforts from both social media and the newsletter differ in that they reached both known and unknown audiences. These numbers show us who of our known audiences have opened and listened to the podcast in the newsletter, and who of our social media audiences have interacted with posts that directed the user to the blog post on the press’s website. The information the statistics presents tells the promoter, in this case the press, how well the campaign was received in terms of views or impressions, openings of

newsletters, clicks on links, and levels of interaction such as time spent on a page or hitting the like button on social media.

Facebook: As far as interaction (in terms of comments and likes) was concerned, the numbers were low, despite Facebook showing that overall users were seeing the posts, with numerous impressions recorded. Emerson and Bikadoroff’s Facebook post reached 144 people. Bowering and Stanley’s post reached 277 people (Figure 7). These numbers in the figure below show reach (yellow bars), and interaction (red bars).

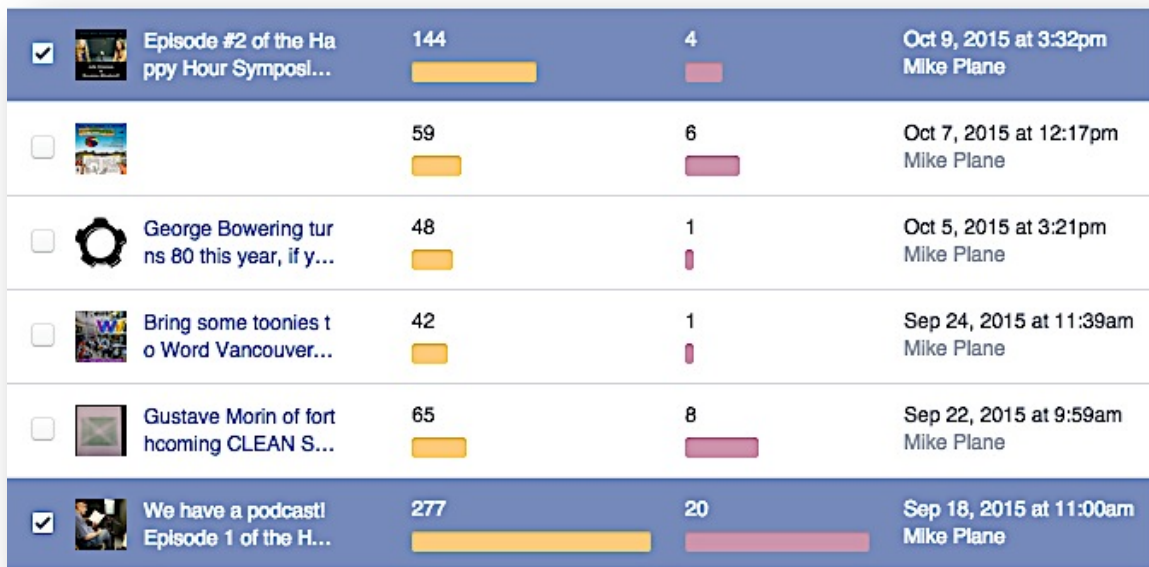


Figure 7: Facebook promotion analytics

Twitter: On Twitter, the tweet about HHS1 received 1,220 impressions with thirty-three total engagements consisting of eleven detailed expansions, eight media engagements, five re-tweets, four loves, four link clicks, and one profile view (Figure 8). An “impression” is when the user sees the post on their timeline, but has not interacted with it. If they do interact with the post through likes, re-tweets, or link clicks, it then would be measured as “engagements.”

HHS2’s tweet received 325 impressions and two re-tweets which were the only total engagement this episode received. Furthermore, New Star promoted Emerson’s *Twenty Seven Stings* book launch on Twitter, and the analytics showed a total of 198 impressions

and thirteen total engagements, which comprised of six link clicks, three detail expands, two likes, one media engagement, and one profile click. This reach is would be considered “organic reach,” as New Star did not put money towards boosting posts to reach views.

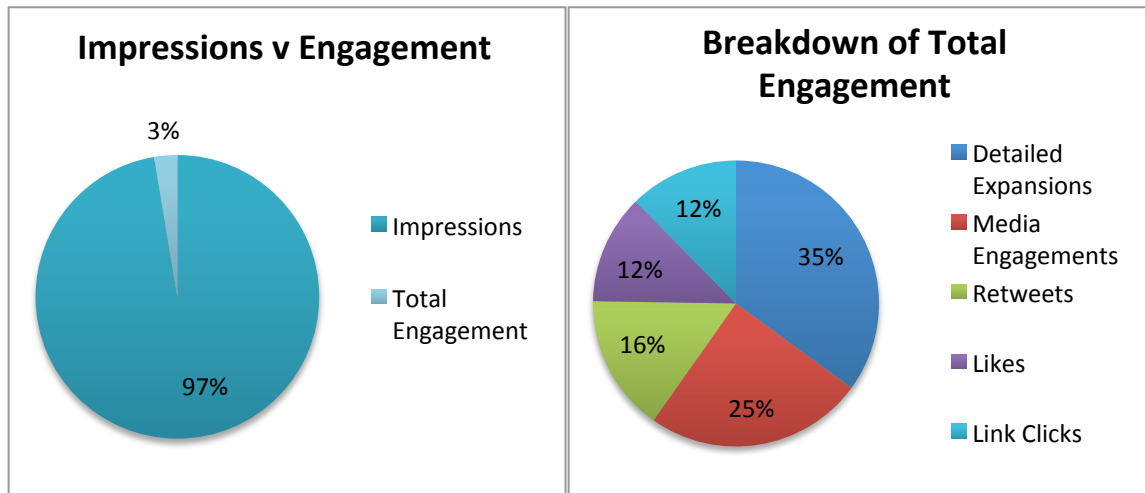


Figure 8: Twitter promotion analytics for HHS1

The statistics show that the promotion of the podcast on social media received impressions from New Star followers and their networks, but low numbers on interaction. From a marketer’s perspective, these might not be the desirable outcomes of their campaigns. Over time, we would hope to see a better ratio between reach and engagement numbers.

Newsletter: As far as newsletter campaigns were concerned, New Star reported good numbers on interaction. The first campaign, which included HHS1, was sent to 1,014 recipients, of whom 34.23% were “unique opens” (those who opened the newsletter at least once); while 6.43% of total recipients clicked on links within the newsletter. HHS2’s newsletter campaign was sent to one thousand unique recipients, of whom a total of 34.97% opened it, and 10.06% clicked on a link.

Furthermore, at least twenty-two recipients clicked on a link to the podcast, with the highest number of clicks being for the HHS1 podcast episode link. In addition to the nine clicks received by HHS1’s podcast link, four individuals clicked on the iTunes link to

download the episode and two clicked on the website's link to peruse the title information and access the book.

For HHS2, the clicks are divided into eleven clicks for the writer's festival, eight clicks for the podcast blog, seven clicks for Bowering's website, six clicks for New Star's website, and the remaining five clicks for Bowering's tour. Germany, Austria, and Italy had an average of four opens each, which could signal international loyalty. Both newsletter campaigns for each episode averaged a 10% open rate.

Festivals and other author/publisher/book events are crucial to spreading the word about the podcast. Promoting the podcast to the number of people who peruse festival booths is almost as effective as online promotion efforts because direct marketing strategies are applied. Sometimes, this type of marketing reaches readers who are not on social media platforms. Flyers, posters, and word-of-mouth could assist the podcast campaign at events such as WORD Vancouver. However, with only a two-man staff at the press that already undertake most of the publishing tasks of the business, full-time or continuous promotion of the podcast is difficult to administer and is naturally a lower priority than editorial and financial duties.

New Star has the potential to grow their community with its podcast. The press boasts 1,752 followers on Twitter, 373 likes on Facebook, and more than 1,000 recipients of their newsletter. Promoting the podcast requires a commitment of regularly updating social media feeds about the podcast and the authors, including creating a permanent link in the layout of the newsletter directing subscribers to the podcast episodes and a prompt to subscribe to the podcast for future uploads. The same permanent link also could be added to authors' websites, such as Emerson's. This would ensure that the marketing and promotion of the podcast is always visible and accessible in every newsletter, and on the author's page who featured in a podcast episode with the press. The presence of the podcast on the press's blog also served as promotion for website visitors, who can see the podcast blog in the right-hand column of the site layout. The blog updates are regularly sent to newsletter subscribers, and sometimes promoted on social media.

Publicity efforts for the podcast (which is a publicity tool itself) were short-lived, because of the duration of my internship, and the above-mentioned factors. However, the press did measure a good number of download analytics. By this measure, the publicity

which was largely unpaid on social media and through the newsletters, delivered a satisfactory result as far as download (and therefore listener) numbers were concerned, especially given the short-time duration of the project. Although the number of interactions in the newsletter could be considered low, impressions and newsletter openings statistics demonstrated that the podcast campaign gained reach even as far as Europe and China. The data shows that the social media and newsletter campaigns provided exposure for the podcast, and the statistics support that this goal was achieved.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The New Star podcast was a pilot project aimed at growing publicity for its authors, bringing them closer to a listenership that could potentially be translated into loyal readers for the press. The promotion of the podcast on social media produced mixed results, with a discrepancy between high impression (reach) numbers and low interaction numbers.

This observation can be compared to numbers from another publishing house's podcast, such as Penguin UK's *Penguin Podcast*. Penguin is an example of a publisher that has fully incorporated the podcast in their publicity strategy. Furthermore, matched with their competitors, the giant publisher enjoys the largest following on social media platforms; yet, their podcast listener numbers are rather low. Although I could not access download numbers, the *Penguin Podcast* receives an average of 1,500 listens on every episode from a following of seven hundred and thirty thousand on SoundCloud, their podcast's distribution platform. Penguin boasts over five hundred thousand Facebook followers, but their numbers on views and interactions seemed somewhat low. For example, in one posting featuring author Irvine Welsh's latest book, *The Blade Artist*, the podcast post received 625 views (0.125% of their Facebook followers), was liked by twenty-seven people (4.3% of all views), and shared eleven times (40.7% of people who liked the post), as shown in Figure 9. This was Welsh's second book with the publisher, and was the latest release by Penguin UK, by perhaps one of the more popular authors under the brand. Yet, these low, but typical, Facebook numbers for Penguin, could also account for podcast listening still being a niche activity. Although podcast listenership is said to grow, the number remains low compared to other forms of media. While Penguin did not share the podcast episode on Twitter (1.3M followers), its host Richard E Grant and the book's author did share the episode on their respective Twitter pages. The level of interaction on these posts averaged to at least sixty people liking the post.

The ratio between the number of Penguin's podcast following on SoundCloud (its main podcast listening platform), and the number of people listening to the podcast is rather low (approximately 500:1). There was one exception where the amount of listens to an episode spiked to more than seven thousand four hundred: the episode featured Neil Gaiman, perhaps the biggest name in graphic novels and audio theatre. This spike could be that the podcast still appeals to a select audience.

In the same light, New Star's ratio of followers to reach/download ratio could also be considered low because the podcast appeals to a very select audience. I would argue that low numbers on podcast post interactions do not necessarily mean an unsuccessful podcast. Rather, true success could be measured whether these listener numbers and subscribers have bought the books promoted on the podcast. However, as this is difficult to determine, the publicity goal of the podcast is giving extra exposure to an author's work and persona. By this extension, the success of the podcast is constituted by the press facilitating an audio presence for their authors.

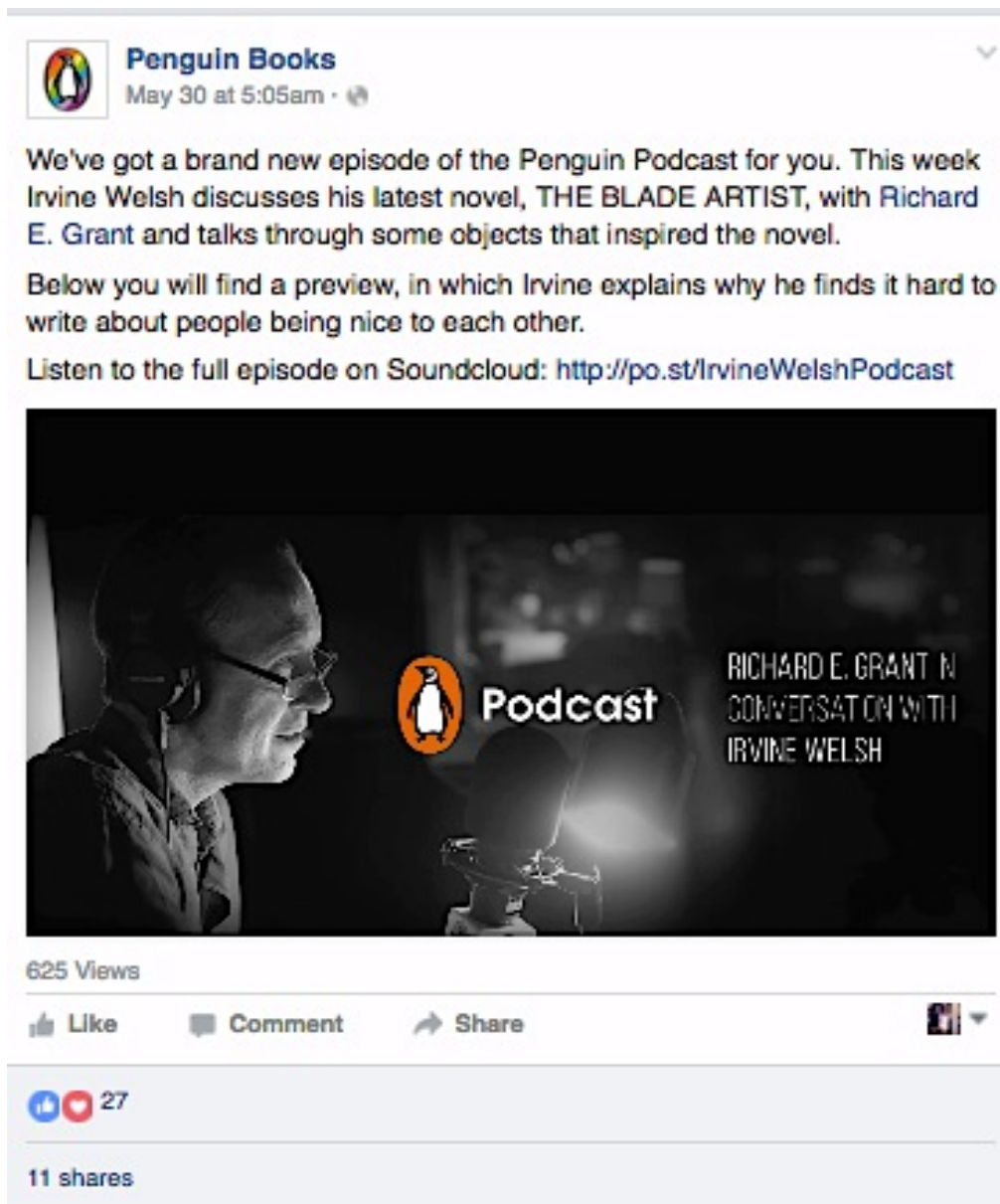


Figure 9: Low number of interaction for Penguin Podcast post on Facebook based on ratio of followers.

Evaluating the analytics from social media, the newsletter, and the website, the project achieved satisfactory results by collectively reaching audiences at the time. However, future plans to move forward with production stagnated because of several in-house circumstances. After the publication of two episodes in the fall of 2015, the press foresaw future episodes featuring more authors. However, as time went by, New Star was forced to focus publishing efforts on publishing new titles, deeming the podcast as secondary to its overall vision. The success of the podcast was short-lived, but the labour-intensive aspect of coordinating with the authors, producing and editing the episodes, and

distributing and promoting the podcast made the outcome of the overall project a challenging one. Below, aspects of the podcast project are evaluated to determine its achievements, weaknesses, and recommendations for the press going forward.

2.1 Achievements:

Project executed: The initial success of the podcast project was being able to organise and execute the two recordings with the respective participants within the internship period. Being able to record, edit, and convert the episodes to a user-friendly format and distribute them on the website, as well as promote them on social media and through the newsletter, can be regarded as an achievement for the press, who brought the idea to life.

Reach: The New Star podcast episodes were a good marketing tool in gaining visibility and exposure for the authors and their books. For the publisher, it was a good brand extension that encouraged awareness and created the potential to expand audiences through the audio platform. By reaching these audiences, the New Star podcast also had the potential to extend to unexplored markets and potentially convert listeners into readers, especially through Twitter, where the first episode received six retweets.

The two episodes delivered satisfactory results. The number of people reached averaged at least 1800 on Twitter and 371 on Facebook collectively for both episodes. The podcast reached an audience organically (unpaid social media promotion), thereby achieving their publicity goals in terms of exposure and reach. Analytics showing interaction with the podcast proved equally as satisfactory with the two episodes receiving an average of one hundred listens for each episode. These numbers may not seem high for some marketers; however, considering the project's short time frame, the results sufficed. Although the campaigns on social media delivered mixed results with little front-end interaction, back-end interactions showed that a significant number of people saw the posts. In this respect, the project was successful in reaching or receiving "eyeballs," but it did not succeed in receiving the anticipated interaction of clicking through to the website to listen to the podcast.

Low cost of production: Besides using the free resources provided by the VPL, the press was able to record episodes using a laptop and microphone. With some laptops, a

microphone is not even necessary. The press was able to record the introduction for the second episode on a laptop with Audacity without the use of a microphone. The press's registration and use of Blubrry cost \$144 for the year.

2.2 Challenges:

Future episodes: Having produced two podcast episodes that showed promise, the project was exciting, but the production of future podcast episodes stagnated. New Star had authors such as Donato Mancini lined up for podcast recording and foresaw pre-publication promotion and publicity with the podcast for an upcoming book, *Sacred Herb/Devil's Weed* by Andrew Struthers. However, months after, the press conceded that podcasting would be a low priority as far as the press's day-to-day business was concerned. The limitation of having only two employees running the press does affect the continuance and consistency of podcast production.

Audience: Although the press has a sense of whom their audience is, it was challenging to determine the podcast's target audience. Dan Kennedy (2011) calls this form of marketing "blind archery," in which a marketer promotes a brand or product to an unspecified audience, hoping someone will respond to their message.¹² Although this was the initial publicity strategy to test the reach of the podcast, it is challenging to determine to which audiences the podcast appealed. There was still a benefit to engaging them on social media platforms by bringing exclusive content to listeners, inviting them into an intimate space with authors through the podcast. It is, however, challenging to know who the audiences are and whether these audiences would translate into readers before and after listening to the podcast. It is equally challenging to measure audience intimacy and audience development from the podcast because of the press's inability to produce further episodes shortly after launching the two episodes.

The promotion of a promotions tool: Having no budget for paying for online promotions did prove to be challenging in effectively evaluating the reach of the podcast on social media, although existing results with organic reach proved satisfactory. However, the average social media campaign is said to take from three months to a year in order to show

¹² Kennedy, D. *The Ultimate Marketing Plan*, 41

results.¹³ Because promotion is non-paid, a lot of effort is placed in continuously promoting the podcast manually on social media feeds to ensure that it stays relevant among audiences and gains traction with newer networks. The podcast's success in reach was short-lived, as the press did not continue promoting the two episodes or produce newer episodes to maintain consistency. Doing this would have sustained an effective publicity strategy associated with the press's brand.

The podcast can be considered a promotions/publicity tool for authors, but the medium required its own share of promotion in order to create awareness of its existence and content. This additional promotion may require extra work and could almost defeat the purpose of the podcast as an independent promotions tool, since it needs to be promoted to gain footing and eventually deliver results for author marketing.

Podcasts do not guarantee sales: New Star saw no evidence of the podcast affecting sales. Results were limited to exposure and reach but did not include sales. According to Leyne, the press has received minimal feedback about the podcast from listeners, with only one person on Twitter remarking that it was a good idea and only a few people mentioning to them in person that they enjoyed the podcast episodes. Therefore, despite the podcast episodes reaching their audiences, they were weak in receiving engagements that gives New Star direct monetary results.

What to do with the data: Looking at the data presented by social media and web analytics, it was difficult to decide what to do with the information in the future. The foresight of the project was therefore limited in providing a blueprint for growing marketing strategies appealing to the amount to people reached with the podcast. Questions of how to engage these audiences and encourage book sales remain unanswered following this project. Essentially, the data indicated that there was an audience who had accessed the podcast episodes; however, not continuing with future episodes immediately after might have resulted in uncertainty about what the existing data could mean for the press, and how to strategically move forward with the podcast.

¹³ Sponder. M. 2009 Web Metrics Guru at. <http://www.webmetricsguru.com/archives/2009/09/social-media-campaigns-take-time-3-months-1-year-for-results/>

2.3 Recommendations:

Podcast recordings at book launches and author readings: New Star has expressed concern over not being able to record consecutive episodes due to authors who will not be available for face-to-face interviews. The press could consider spontaneous recordings during events such as book launches and author readings. This would be done with consent from authors. The podcast could mimic a radio-styled program, whereby listeners are able to feel as if they are part of the event without having to be there physically. This is especially beneficial for New Star audiences outside the Vancouver area. This arrangement could benefit the press, who would still like to have people “attend” events and support their authors through live streaming, for example. Furthermore, with the difficulty of finding time and the limited availability of the authors to record episodes, the podcast episode would effortlessly cover the author readings without too much set up, since episodes can be recorded using a phone or laptop and then transferred to Audacity for editing. Using this method of producing podcast episodes would also maintain production consistency, as episodes would form part of book launches and author readings.

Time: One of the weaknesses of the podcast was the long episode durations. Improvements for the podcast would focus on producing shorter recording sessions and testing different interviewing/conversation formats. The press could essentially create a template directing participants on what to talk about during their recorded sessions, which could average a recording time of fifteen minutes per episode. This way, not a lot of time is invested in the overall production process, and both authors and the press would be obliged to keep content specific. The shorter format could also result in more downloads for a quick listen.

Schedule and clauses: Although there was an informal schedule with arranging author recordings, setting up an official recording schedule ahead of time with the authors would ensure a clearer blueprint as far as podcast productions and expectations are concerned. The authors’ busy schedules and the press’s other publishing commitments would be taken into consideration when agreeing upon a calendar date for recording. Having a long-term (six months maximum) schedule would give publishers the advantage of planning recordings in accordance with launch dates, as well as other author and publisher events. Furthermore, to ensure recording follows through, the press could set up a

promotional or publicity clause in their contracts with both existing and acquired authors that specifies podcast recording at author events.

Overcoming technical difficulties: During the project, there were difficulties in setting up recording. To ensure efficiency during production and editing, it is important to familiarise and test the equipment and software before recording an episode. This is important, as the producer would appear more confident to the authors and it would save valuable time. In hindsight, requesting headphones for closer listening would ensure that the producer is able to detect the difference in sound levels between the two authors during recording. Additionally, a trial run and playback in the studio could prevent issues with sound quality.

Staffing: Producing future podcast episodes has put a lot of strain on a two-man set up at New Star. A dedicated person or team would be essential for the press to effectively evaluate the benefits of the podcast in their marketing plan. The podcast is said to be an easy tool to use that requires little overhead for production and editing. However, considering the time it takes to manage the entire project on a continuous basis, hiring staff or volunteers, or outsourcing production and editing, might be an alternative option for the press.

Encourage sales action on podcast blog: Although the podcast cannot produce direct sales for the press, the press could include a call-to-action link to access the book's page on the press's website with a button to make an online payment via PayPal. This could possibly address the lack of sales deriving from the podcast. The episodes themselves do include a call-to-action whereupon the hosts conclude with purchasing and social media information.



Figure 10: Sales action on book's page could be placed on podcast blog

Continued engagement strategy: Following the information provided by analytics, New Star could continue to engage people who have listened and downloaded an episode. Their reviews could be shared via email to the press or on social media, and a forum could be created for the authors to respond to comments on their personal websites or on the press's blog, which is promoted through social media and the newsletter. Doing this would open a dialogue between the press and its audience and create a closer sense of community for the authors and the press. Furthermore, the press can engage these listeners through a short survey to establish who exactly is their audience and also to receive feedback on the podcast. The incentive for the listeners to answer such a survey could be the chance to win a free book.

3. CONCLUSION

The podcast project aimed to introduce a new publicity platform for New Star authors. Where the press had limited resources that are to be carefully allocated, the podcast was free to produce but does require extra work to maintain. Therefore, *The Happy Hour Symposia* will only feature occasional episodes with authors rather than a regular weekly or monthly schedule that the podcast often requires. Despite the weaknesses and challenges presented during and after the podcast project, the press will not wholly abandon the podcast.

This report explored the introduction of a podcast for New Star Books in expanding their promotions and publicity strategies. When the press begins to use the medium more regularly, they will be able to measure and improve the impact podcasts have on the promotion and marketing of their book titles. If suitably invested in, the podcast can have an active and lasting place in the publishing business as a marketing tool. Investment in the podcast takes the form of time, money, and mental energy. New Star needs to fully apply themselves to the long-term commitment of producing, distributing, and promoting their podcast episodes for them to become a notable aspect of their marketing strategy. With this commitment comes a financial investment in quality hosts, equipment, and marketing efforts to promote the podcast episodes on third-party websites and podcast aggregator sites. The amount of energy required to invest in a podcast would spur from the passion and belief that the podcast can serve the press's editorial and marketing purposes effectively, and perhaps profitably.

Analytics showed that the podcast project delivered satisfactory results, with the first two episodes receiving an average of one hundred listens each. Although the campaigns on social media seemed to deliver mixed results with little front-end interaction, back-end interactions showed that a significant number of people saw the posts. The project could be considered unsuccessful since the podcast, as a publicity project, did not generate sales for the press's books, and it stagnated in moving forward, as the press has not produced follow-

up episodes since the initial two episodes. However, according to the press, the podcast has not been discontinued and they still value podcasts as a positive tool for author publicity.

Despite some weaknesses, the project with New Star Books was an opportunity to test the promotional effectiveness of the medium and its benefits in terms of exposure and traction for authors and the press. The New Star participants saw the benefits of podcasting even before sitting down to record, though they and the press were all trying it for the first time. The potential of the podcast as a stand-alone product creating value for the listener and reader speaks volumes to the effectiveness of storytelling and conversations with the medium, fitting in nicely within the publishing industry. However, a dedicated person or team is necessary in ensuring that the medium is fully exploited as an effective marketing tool for a publisher, its authors, and its titles.

This report showed the various platforms available for distribution and analytics. These platforms are necessary additions to any podcasting project to effectively reach and measure their audiences. It was crucial to promote the podcast on a continuous basis, and although there was no real expense involved in marketing the podcast (aside from the man hours), social media and the newsletter campaign demonstrated that such efforts were not in vain.

Conclusively, the overall New Star podcast project delivered mixed result. It was successfully executed as a publicity tool for the four authors reaching out to audiences new and established giving the authors some exposure, taking into consideration the limited amount of time and small budget. The press anticipated plans to include the podcast in their marketing plans by producing ongoing episodes for *The Happy Hour Symposia*, but due to a lack of staff and other resources such as time and money, the project could be deemed unsuccessful because the press might consider the overall project burdensome in organising and executing episodes on a continuous basis.

4. REFERENCES

- Cochrane, Todd. *Podcasting: The Do-It-Yourself Guide*. Indianapolis: Wiley Publishing, 2005
- Finn, Kevin. Podcast Subscribers: These Are Not the Statistics You're Looking For. - Create Buzz. Medium. 2014. Accessed September 6, 2015. <https://medium.com/create-buzz/podcast-subscribers-these-are-not-the-statistics-youre-looking-for-3c0ddff25132>.
- Greenfield, Rebecca. "The Surprisingly (Profitable) Rise of Podcasts" in Fast Company: <http://www.fastcompany.com/3035954/most-creative-people/the-surprisingly-profitable-rise-of-podcast-networks>. September 2014.
- Gross, Jessica. "Eight Excellent Literary Podcasts for your Morning Commute" at <http://electricliterature.com/eight-excellent-literary-podcasts-for-your-morning-commute/> January 2015... Accessed September 30, 2015
- Herman, Jeff. *Guide to Book Publishers, Editors & Literary Agents: Who They Are, What They Want, How to Win them Over*. New World Library: Novato, 2014
- Herrington, Jack. *Podcasting Hacks: Tips and Tools for Blogging out Loud*. Sebastopol: O'Reilly, 2005
- Kennedy, Daniel. *The Ultimate Marketing Plan*. Fourth Edition. Adams Business: Avon, 2011
- Lorimer, Rowland. *Ultra Libris: Policy, Technology, and the Creative Economy of Book Publishing in Canada*. Toronto: ECW Press, 2012
- Mutrie, Phillip. *Internet Marketing Explained: Insider Secrets to Online Mastery and Success*. Extreme Wealth Potentials: Simcoe, 2011
- Mack, Steve, and Mitch Ratcliffe. *Podcasting Bible*. Indianapolis, IN: Wiley, 2007.
- Nawotka, Edward. March 2015. "How A Publishing Podcast Can Change a Book's Life" in *Publishing Perspectives* at <http://publishingperspectives.com/2015/03/how-a-publishing-podcast-can-change-a-books-life/#.VpbjFrPF-zP>
- Iddamsetty, Anshuman. *Sound Strategy: How Can 11-minute Podcast Can Change a Book's Life - ...* *Sound Strategy: How Can 11-minute Podcast Can Change a Book's Life*. Accessed August 31, 2015.

<http://www.slideshare.net/booknetcanada/sound-strategy-how-can-11minute-podcast-can-change-a-books-life-tech-forum-2015-anshuman-iddamsetty>.

Mack, Steve and Ratcliffe, Mitch. *Podcasting Bible*. Wiley Publishing: 2007

Mateijko, Ron. "The Podcast Opportunity for Publishers" at <http://www.pubexec.com/article/the-podcast-opportunity-publishers/> August 2015.

Morrissey, Brian. "Value of a Fan on Social Media: \$3.60," *AdWeek*, April 13, 2010.

O'Leary, Brian. BookNet Canada "Podcast: Content Marketing for Book Publishers." *TechForum* August 2015.

Scott, Kate. November 2015. "25 Outstanding Podcasts for Readers" in *Book Riot*.

<http://bookriot.com/2015/11/25/25-outstanding-podcasts-readers/>

Shiffman, Denise. *The Age of Engage: Reinventing Marketing for Today's Connected, Collaborative, and Hyperinteractive Culture*. Hunt Street Press: Ladera Ranch, 2008

Silverman ,David. and Parvizi, Parviz. "The Future of Podcasting "at *Tech Crunch* Blog:

<http://techcrunch.com/2015/07/18/the-future-of-podcasting/> June 18, 2015.

Sponder, Mike. *Social Media Analytics: Effective Tools for Building, Interpreting, and Using Metrics*. New York: McGraw-Hill: 2012

Washenko, Anna. Canadian Podcast Listenership Among Driver Gradually Growing" at *Rain News*:

<http://rainnews.com/canadian-podcast-listenership-among-drivers-growing-gradually/>

April 2016

Personal Communications:

Leyne, Michael. E-mail interview by author. 2015-2016

Maurer, Rolf. Interview by author. August 25, 2015.