

PUBLISHERS' REPRESENTATIVES:
AN ANALYSIS OF AN INDEPENDENT COMMISSIONED REP
AGENCY IN THE CANADIAN TRADE BOOK INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this report is to illuminate the role of publishers' representatives in the Canadian trade book industry. Using Kate Walker & Company Ltd.¹ as a leading example of a commissioned sales rep agency, this report depicts the nature of the relationships that sales representatives have with their publisher clients and their spectrum of retailer, library, and wholesaler customers. To ensure a broad scope, the information presented here is based largely on statements from personnel working for and the activities of Kate Walker & Co. as well as the statements of other sales reps working for different companies and members of the publishing and bookselling communities.

¹ Kate Walker & Company Ltd. will be referred to as Kate Walker & Co. throughout this paper.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Publishing a book for the Canadian trade book market involves many steps; it takes numerous people with a variety of skill sets to take a book from its initial stage as an idea, to create a product with a specific spot in the market, to generate demand and interest from the public, and to get copies of the book into the hands of consumers via a retailer.

Sales representatives are a fundamental part of the supply chain of books. They are responsible for selling the publishers' products to retailers, who in turn will sell the books to their customers. This report details the relationship that sales reps have with their publisher clients as well as independent bookstores, national or chain retailers, wholesalers, and alternative or non-traditional book retailers.

Each type of retailer provides access to an important market for publishers, so it is crucial that publishers' representatives understand the needs and nuances of the different retailers. Independent bookstores base their purchasing decisions on knowledge of their customer base and what their sales reps can tell them about the books. National or chain bookstores or retailers, such as Indigo/Chapters or Costco, frequently make their purchasing decisions through one head office, and all the outlets of the chain will be selling nearly the same books. They may also employ regional advisors who research and offer region-specific ordering suggestions to the national purchasers.

The retailer may be a wholesaler, a company that will buy a large quantity of books from the publisher at a steep discount, and then sell them to bookstores, libraries, or other customers with value-added services. Wholesalers have carved out a place for themselves by

offering their customers availability of mainstream titles, fast shipping, and the ability to combine orders from several publishers to avoid hard-to-meet minimum order quantities.

Sales reps also seek customers for their books through non-traditional channels, which are frequently non-book retailers. Reps can use the subject matter of their books to pursue retailers specializing in that particular area.

In order to successfully represent their publisher clients and engage the book-ordering system on their behalf, sales reps must maintain strong relationships with all possible retailers. They are facilitators who provide an important link in the flow of information. Ultimately, they have stakes in the success of publishers and booksellers alike.

2. SALES REPS IN THE CANADIAN TRADE BOOK INDUSTRY

A variety of different types of sales reps exist in the Canadian trade book industry. Multinational publishers selling and/or publishing in Canada, such as Random House Canada, HarperCollins Canada, Penguin Books Canada or Simon & Schuster Canada, have designated in-house sales reps across the country. Simon & Schuster Canada, for example, has five field representatives across Canada selling to independent and regional accounts, seven sales representatives in Ontario selling to national accounts, one Library Sales Manager and one Special Sales Manager.² For multinationals, the emphasis in each territory is on key accounts; 80% of their business is conducted with 20% of their accounts.³

Small Canadian publishers do not necessarily have the same patterns of sales to retailers as the multinationals. They do not have the money to invest in blockbuster promotional campaigns to compete with multinationals and to purchase placement in chain stores. Canadian-owned publishers tend to publish books that, because of content or theme, find smaller audiences with a larger percentage of sales through independent bookstores, libraries, and alternative retailers. To reach this variety of retailers across Canada, they need a sales force to represent their books.

Sales agencies provide representation for publishers in specific geographic areas of the country. Their reps offer the advantage of strong relationships with the booksellers in their territories and regular buying appointments with them each season. The objective of sales

² Kate Saunders, interview with Leslie Bootle, February 20, 2009.

³ Saunders-Bootle interview, February 20, 2009.

reps is to present their list to as many customers as possible, usually in person, so that the customers can view samples of the books and hear the reasons why they should be carried in their store. These agencies represent many different publishers, which makes buying appointments worth booksellers' time.

For small publishers with limited staff resources, it is costly and inefficient to have in-house sales reps to cover the entire country. As such, a choice made by many Canadian publishers is to outsource their sales representation to an agency specializing in sales for the book trade; it is more cost effective to pay a commission to these sales reps than to pay the salary of in-house reps.⁴

The services offered by sales rep agencies vary. Some, like Sandhill Book Marketing Ltd.,⁵ provide both distribution and sales for independent publishers on a book-by-book basis. Some presses choose to belong to the Literary Press Group (LPG), a not-for-profit group of small independent Canadian presses that, in addition to being an advocacy group, offers a sales force for its more than sixty members.⁶ This sales force is comprised of four sales reps who represent LPG publishers at trade shows and sell to bookstores and libraries.

Other agencies are commissioned rep agencies that earn commission as a group from the publisher based on sales within their designated territory. Craig Siddall & Associates is based in Western Canada and represents both Canadian and international presses. Its largest contract is with Canadian Manda, a Canadian distributor of national and international

⁴ Dot Middlemass, interview with Leslie Bootle, February 8, 2009.

⁵ Sandhill Book Marketing Ltd., "Welcome to Sandhill Book Marketing," <http://www.sandhillbooks.com/>.

⁶ Literary Press Group, "Welcome to the Literary Press Group," <http://www.lpg.ca>.

publishers that offers full-service distribution and sales in Canada. Canadian Manda has its own sales reps in Eastern Canada, and contracts Craig Siddall & Associates to sell its publishers' titles in Western Canada. Michael Reynolds & Associates, also a commissioned rep agency based in Western Canada, holds a contract with the major Canadian distributor, Publishers Group Canada (PGC).⁷ Until recently Hornblower Book Group was a commissioned rep agency, but is now "an association of independent sales agents in eastern Canada," that continues to work under the reputable and recognizable name of Hornblower.⁸

Kate Walker & Company Ltd., the subject of this report's case study, is another commissioned rep agency that has sales reps across Canada. As with many of these agencies, the role of Kate Walker & Co. is to fill the gap in the supply chain between publisher and bookseller. As such, the term "sales reps" hardly does them justice; Kate Walker & Co. calls its employees "publishers' representatives."⁹ For their customers, they are the face of the publishers, which means relaying information and providing customer service on behalf of the publishers whenever concerns arise.¹⁰

⁷ Publishers Group Canada, "Sales Reps," <http://www.pgcbooks.ca/salesreps.html>.

⁸ Hornblower Book Group, "About Us," <http://www.hornblowerbooks.com/>.

⁹ Kate Walker & Company, Ltd., "Welcome to Kate Walker & Company, Ltd.," <http://www.katewalker.com/>.

¹⁰ Kate Walker, interview with Leslie Bootle, June 5, 2008.

3. CASE STUDY: KATE WALKER & COMPANY LTD.

I. INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

Kate Walker & Company Ltd. is a successful purveyor of representation services in the Canadian trade book industry, making it an excellent case study to illuminate this part of the publishing process. Kate Walker & Co. can trace its roots back to 1957, when Jim Douglas established Douglas Agencies in BC. On the foundation of being a sales rep for McClelland and Stewart, Jim Douglas set up Douglas Agencies to provide sales representation for three major Toronto publishers: McClelland & Stewart, Macmillan, and University of Toronto Press.¹¹ In the 1970s, Douglas was joined by Scott McIntyre and Mark Stanton who came from McClelland & Stewart and Van Nostrand Reinhold, respectively. In 1972 they purchased Douglas Agencies and renamed it McIntyre & Stanton. Jim Douglas, who had also begun the first library wholesaling business in B.C. in 1964, founded the publishing company J.J. Douglas in 1971 and took on Scott McIntyre as a partner to form Douglas & McIntyre in 1978.

In 1976, McIntyre & Stanton recruited Allan MacDougall, another McClelland & Stewart employee, to join their sales agency. In 1977, McIntyre left to focus on J.J. Douglas and the agency was renamed Stanton & MacDougall. It grew quickly as it acquired contracts to represent major central Canadian publishers in the West. To keep up with the increased demand for timely access to books, it started leasing warehouse space and shipping

¹¹ "Evolution of an Industry: 50 Years in the B.C. Book Trade," *Quill & Quire*, April 2004, 47.

books for Toronto publishers.¹² Kate Walker, formerly a rep with William Collins & Sons, joined Stanton & MacDougall in 1978 as a sales rep.

In 1980, Stanton and MacDougall diversified. In addition to running a sales agency and a warehouse depot (a service called BookExpress), they decided to launch a full-fledged distribution company called Raincoast Book Distribution. However, the growth did not stop there. In 1989, Stanton and MacDougall started a publishing division called Raincoast Books and by 1991 they had published seventeen titles. By this point, Stanton and MacDougall were not only spreading themselves thin, but also creating a conflict of interest operating a sales agency representing many publishers, including themselves. They decided to concentrate on Raincoast Books and sell Stanton & MacDougall to their sales manager Kate Walker, a deal which became official in January of 1992. In 1994, the agency was renamed Kate Walker and Company, Ltd.

Under Kate Walker, the company expanded to employ sales representatives across the country. Walker hired Saffron Beckwith to work in the Toronto office in 1994, and Beckwith became the Eastern Sales Manager in 1999. In 2007, Beckwith purchased part of the company to become co-owner with Walker.¹³ Beckwith now manages national accounts for the agency. Kate Walker & Co. currently offers cross-Canada representation to 31 independent Canadian publisher clients.¹⁴

¹² Kate Walker & Company, Ltd., "Kate Walker & Company Survival Guide" (information binder, 2005).

¹³ Derek Wieler, "Beckwith Moves up to Co-Owner at Kate Walker," *Quill & Quire*, November 27, 2007, http://www.quillandquire.com/news/article.cfm?article_id=8117.

¹⁴ Kate Walker & Company, Ltd., "Our Publishers," <http://www.katewalker.com/publishers.html>.

In addition to expanding in geographic territory, the company has evolved in the services that it offers its publishers. Building on the provision of sales representation, Kate Walker & Co. offered publicity services. In the 1980s and 1990s, few publishers had regional publicists. When they sent authors on tour, it was important to have local publicists with important regional media contacts, and in a position to secure promotion for authors. Kate Walker & Co. employed publicists in Alberta and B.C. in the 1990s. However, with advancements in technology, localized publicists were replaced by the ability to send out email requests for interviews and publicity became centralized out of publishers' head offices.¹⁵

But the publishers still needed someone who could meet and greet authors on tour and take them to their interviews. Kate Walker & Co. began to offer author accompaniment as a paid service because it had the human resources in a number of cities. As a complement to this service, Kate Walker & Co. distributed an author tour newsletter to its regional contacts called "Look Who's Coming," which focused on selling the author's name and personality rather than the book.¹⁶ This service was available to both publisher clients and any publishers who lacked reps in every city. In the late 1990s, Kate Walker & Co. stopped offering this service because it did not complement its main goal of selling books.¹⁷ Facilitating author tours became less profitable than concentrating on broadening its scope of retailers, so it decided to invest its energy in approaching new markets.

¹⁵ Walker-Bootle interview, June 5, 2008.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Thus, in 2000, Kate Walker & Co. launched a gift division by hiring two reps dedicated to this market.¹⁸ Kate Walker & Co. is “hired by publishers to sell their books to as broad a range of customers as possible—bookstores, libraries, wholesalers, specialty retailers, wherever it makes sense,”¹⁹ so embarking in this new branch of business is an effective way to meet the needs of its clients. By broadening its list to include book-related gift items, Kate Walker & Co. has easier access into non-traditional book markets.

Today, Kate Walker & Co.’s head office is in Vancouver and it has another office in Toronto. Each of these offices has three sales reps (each with a specific geographic territory or client list), one gift account rep, and a showroom of book samples. The Vancouver office has an office manager who supports all of the reps. Also, four sales reps work out of home offices in different cities across the country: Victoria, Calgary, Winnipeg, and Ottawa.²⁰ Kate Walker & Co. is the only commissioned sales agency to cover all of Canada including two of the territories in the North.²¹

Considering the spread of population across Canada, it is remarkable that Kate Walker & Co. has the same number of reps in Ontario as it does in British Columbia. This is as much a response to its roots in BC, which have enabled it to represent a lot of BC publishers and develop “a well-established customer base” in BC, as it is to the large number of independent bookstores in BC.²²

¹⁸ Kate Walker & Company, Ltd., “Kate Walker & Company Survival Guide.”

¹⁹ Walker-Bootle interview, June 5, 2008.

²⁰ See Table I for the territory covered by each sales representative.

²¹ Kate Walker & Company, Ltd., “Request For Proposal” (proposal template, Toronto, ON).

²² Kate Walker, email message to Leslie Bootle, January 23, 2009.

Table 1. Kate Walker & Co. employees

| NAME OF REPRESENTATIVE | JOB TITLE | TERRITORY REPRESENTING |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Kate Walker | President, Co-owner, Western Sales Manager, Sales Representative | Metro Vancouver, North Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands, Sunshine Coast, West Kootenay, Northwest Territory |
| Dot Middlemass | Sales Representative | Metro Vancouver, North Vancouver Island, Okanagan, Bowen Island |
| Ali Hewitt | Sales Representative | Metro Vancouver, Haida Gwaii, Whistler, North and Central BC, Yukon |
| Lorna MacDonald | Sales Representative | Southern Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands |
| Susan Toy | Sales Representative | East Kootenays, Alberta |
| Rorie Bruce | Sales Representative | Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northern Ontario |
| Saffron Beckwith | Co-owner, Eastern Sales Manager, Sales Representative | National accounts out of the Toronto office, Metro Toronto |
| Karen Beattie | Sales Representative | Metro Toronto |
| Morgen Young | Sales Representative | Metro Toronto, Southwestern Ontario |
| Debbie Brown | Sales Representative | Eastern Ontario, Quebec, Maritimes |
| Cheryl Fraser | Gift Accounts Manager, Sales Representative | Gift accounts out of the Vancouver office |
| Claire Blicher | Sales Representative | Gift accounts out of the Toronto office |
| Heike Kapp | Office Manager | Vancouver office |

Kate Walker & Co. provides exceptional customer service to both its publisher clients and bookseller customers; the regard in which the agency is held, in combination

with its long-standing accounts, bears this out. In 2006, president Kate Walker was the recipient of the Gray Campbell Distinguished Service Award from the Association of Book Publishers of BC, which is awarded annually to “an individual who has made a significant contribution to the book publishing industry in the province.”²³ This case study examines Kate Walker & Co.’s relationship with its publisher clients; its independent bookstore, chain bookstore, library, and wholesaler customers; alternative market opportunities; competition; and non-trade book markets outside of its scope. Following the case study, this paper looks at two other sales reps operating in Canada as a basis of comparison.

²³ Kate Walker, email message to Leslie Bootle, March 23, 2009.

II. PUBLISHER CLIENTS

As mentioned earlier, Kate Walker & Co. represents 31 Canadian publishers and suppliers of book-related products (see Table 2). Its list of publisher clients is constantly changing as publishers create new imprints; undergo acquisitions, mergers, or even shut-downs; change their distribution; or begin or end distribution of other firms. Most of Kate Walker & Co.'s publishers publish new books each season, which means that there is a rapid cycle of information for the Kate Walker & Co. reps to receive, digest, spread to customers, and then store away as backlist material when the next frontlist appears. This flux means that the reps need to be aware of the latest information at all times, and be willing to adapt quickly to changes.

Table 2. Kate Walker & Co.'s list of clients as of January 2009

| PUBLISHER/SUPPLIER | IMPRINTS OR DISTRIBUTED PUBLISHERS (ALSO SOLD BY KATE WALKER & CO.) |
|--|---|
| Broadview Press | Freehand Press |
| Carolyn Forsman* | |
| Choose Your Own Adventure | |
| Distributed Art Publishers (DAP) | |
| D&M (formerly Douglas & McIntyre ²⁴) | Atlas & Co. Douglas & McIntyre Farrar, Straus & Giroux Greystone |
| Dorling Kindersley | Rough Guides |
| Dundurn Group | |
| Formac/Lorimer Publishing | |

²⁴ D&M Publishers Inc., "Media Release: Douglas & McIntyre Becomes D&M Publishers Inc.," <http://www.dmpibooks.com/get/pdf/event/RenamingMediaReleaseFINAL.pdf>.

| PUBLISHER/SUPPLIER | IMPRINTS OR DISTRIBUTED PUBLISHERS (ALSO SOLD BY KATE WALKER & CO.) |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Galison | Mudpuppy Press |
| Garfinkel Calendar | |
| Goose Lane Editions | |
| Great Plains Publishing | |
| Harbour Publishing | Caitlin Nightwood |
| Kids Can Press | |
| Literary Luminaries* | |
| McGill-Queen's University Press | |
| Nimbus Publishing | Acorn Cape Breton University Pottersfield |
| Napoleon & Company | |
| Oolichan Books | |
| Orca Book Publishers | |
| Pacific Educational Press | |
| Peter Pauper Press | |
| Polestar Calendars | |
| Raincoast Book Distribution | Amacom Berrett-Koehler Blue Apple Chronicle Drawn & Quarterly Gibbs Smith Hay House Laurence King Lonely Planet Magnetic Poetry Milepost Moleskine Mountaineers New Harbinger OwlKids Oxmoor/Sunset |

| PUBLISHER/SUPPLIER | IMPRINTS OR DISTRIBUTED PUBLISHERS (ALSO SOLD BY KATE WALKER & CO.) |
|------------------------------|--|
| | Portable Press |
| | Princeton Architectural Press |
| | Quirk |
| | Silver Dolphin |
| | Thunder Bay Press |
| Reader's Digest Canada | |
| Royal Ontario Museum | |
| Second Story Press | Book Publishing Company |
| Sono Nis Press | |
| Subway Books | |
| University of Alberta Press | |
| UBC Press | Brookings Institute Press |
| | Earthscan |
| | Island Press |
| | Jessica Kingsley |
| | Manchester University Press |
| | Michigan State |
| | Oregon State University Press |
| | Paradigm |
| | Royal BC Museum |
| | Transaction |
| | University of Arizona Press |
| | University of Washington Press |
| | University Press of New England |
| University of Calgary Press | |
| University of Manitoba Press | |
| Wonder-Shirts* | |

*These companies are not publishers, but producers of book-related merchandise.

Most of Kate Walker & Co.'s publishers have been represented by the agency for a long time; amongst the oldest clients are Douglas & McIntyre since 1974, Formac/Lorimer

since 1979, and Sono Nis since 1980.²⁵ This speaks highly of the relationship that Kate Walker & Co. has built with them. Kate Walker & Co. offers continuity with the style of publishing it represents, one of the competitive strengths that have helped create out an identity for the agency with booksellers.²⁶

One of the foremost priorities of the agency is to offer exceptional customer service to both publishers and retailers. For many bookstores, Kate Walker & Co. reps are the face of the publishers, perhaps the only person associated with a particular publisher that they will ever meet. This means that Kate Walker & Co. reps are the go-to people for issues that a customer might be having with a publisher. For example, if a retailer suddenly stops ordering from a particular publisher, it is the job of the rep to delve into the issue and find out why. This may alert the publisher to an issue it may not have been aware of, which in turn helps it respond to customers' needs and do its job better. For Kate Walker & Co., keeping clients satisfied is its job, and its clients have a significant stake in the satisfaction of their customers.

a) Acquiring new publishers

Kate Walker & Co. continues to look for more publishers to add to its list, but it does not want to exceed its capacity. The goal is to keep publishers happy, and if the reps are stretched too thin, then that goal is difficult to achieve. Eastern Sales Manager Saffron

²⁵ Kate Walker & Company, Ltd., "Request For Proposal."

²⁶ Walker-Bootle interview, June 5, 2008.

Beckwith has been working hard to let publishers know about Kate Walker & Co.,²⁷ which has led to its recent acquisition of three new clients in January 2009: Napoleon and Company, Choose Your Own Adventure and Peter Pauper Press.²⁸

The consideration of a new publisher client is collaborative amongst all of the reps. Particular emphasis is placed on whether personnel feel that they can improve a publisher's sales, whether reps feel they can sell the publisher's titles, whether they want to sell the titles, and whether the titles and the publisher are a good fit with Kate Walker & Co.'s way of doing business.²⁹ Kate Walker & Co. also considers whether the publisher is committed "to the long-term,"³⁰ i.e. whether they are well-managed and prepared to conduct business in a sustainable way.

The publisher must also have a solid distribution system in place, because if publishers are unable to get their books to retailers in a timely manner, they will stop ordering, which may have a negative impact on Kate Walker & Co. in terms of retailer dissatisfaction. Perhaps most importantly, Walker reports, "We take on publishers that we think will keep our list broad and mix well with what we are already doing."³¹

²⁷ Walker-Bootle email, January 23, 2009.

²⁸ "Agency Change: Kate Walker & Company," *Quill & Quire*, January 9, 2009, http://www.quillandquire.com/news/article.cfm?article_id=10432.

²⁹ Walker-Bootle interview, June 5, 2008.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Walker-Bootle email, January 23, 2009.

b) Individual contracts

It takes a lot of finesse for Kate Walker & Co. to keep all its publishers happy; to that end, each has a specific contract with certain parameters. For independent Canadian publishers, choosing which distribution and sales methods to use for their books depends on many factors. Some publishers seek to hire a company that can provide distribution, sales, and publicity, such as Canadian Manda. Others hire a distributor, like University of Toronto Press (UTP) or Georgetown Terminal Warehouse (GTW), and then a commissioned rep agency like Hornblower or Kate Walker & Co. Frequently, in order to have cross-country representation, publishers will hire rep groups for certain geographic territories. For example, Hornblower represents in Eastern Canada, while Michael Reynolds & Associates represents in Western Canada, so many publishers choose to hire both agencies.³²

For Kate Walker & Co., there is no such thing as a universal contract that it signs with all of its publishers. Kate Walker & Co. needs to be flexible around each individual publisher's needs because as an agency, it is more valuable to customers if it has a variety of publishers on its list. The most significant contractual variation is the geographic territory that Kate Walker & Co. has the rights to sell in. Some publishers also prefer to retain rights to sell to specific markets, such as national accounts or libraries. To demonstrate the differences in publisher contracts and relationships, as well as the way that Kate Walker & Co. is impacted whenever publishers make changes to their lists or imprints, three Canadian publishers represented by Kate Walker & Co. are profiled below.

³² Morgen Young, interview with Leslie Bootle, January 29, 2009.

c) Raincoast Books

Raincoast Books currently distributes 21 international publishers within Canada, making it Kate Walker & Co.'s biggest client. Formerly, Raincoast was also a Canadian publisher, but closed its publishing operations in January 2008.³³ Raincoast offers distribution, sales, and marketing services in Canada to its clients; it has an in-house sales, marketing, and publicity team, but has outsourced its sales representation to Kate Walker & Co. in Western Canada and Ontario, and Hornblower Book Group in Eastern and Atlantic Canada. Historically, Kate Walker & Co. did not have reps in the East, and its strength today remains in Western and Central Canada and Ontario; it has only one sales rep to cover Quebec and the Atlantic provinces. Hornblower has a strong presence in Atlantic Canada with rep Genevieve Loughlin.³⁴

Due to Raincoast's shared beginnings with Kate Walker & Co. as well as their proximity (Kate Walker & Co leases space in the Raincoast building for its Vancouver office), company reorganization at Raincoast resounds at Kate Walker & Co. One example of the significant changes Raincoast has undergone in the last year is its "downsizing strategy," where Raincoast dropped "about a dozen of its smaller publisher clients in its distribution operations," including Bloomsbury and other UK publishers Fantagraphics,

³³ Scott MacDonald, "Raincoast Drops Publishing Program, Plans Cuts Across the Board," *Quill & Quire*, January 8, 2008, http://www.quillandquiere.com/news/article.cfm?article_id=8170.

³⁴ Hornblower Book Group, "Contact Us," <http://www.hornblowerbooks.com/contact.html>.

Frances Lincoln, Kyle Cathie and Quadrille.³⁵ Also, in January 2009, Raincoast ceased to distribute Harcourt, a key US adult and children's book publisher.

Raincoast has since picked up several new lines, such as Oxmoor House, whose brands include Cooking Light, Sunset, and Southern Living, and OwlKids Books.³⁶ These changes at Raincoast created room on Kate Walker & Co.'s roster, which led to its signing of Napoleon and Company, Choose Your Own Adventure and Peter Pauper Press in January 2009.

Not only is Raincoast unique because of its size and proximity to Kate Walker & Co., but it also has a sales force of its own. Sandy Cooper, the sales director for Raincoast, is "in charge of dealing with the company's various sales agencies: Walker & Company [sic], Hornblower Books."³⁷ Cooper, formerly a sales rep for HarperCollins, is Kate Walker & Co.'s main contact at Raincoast, and she ensures that the reps have all the necessary materials to sell Raincoast's books: catalogues, samples, prizes, specials, etc. She also coordinates the Raincoast portion of the semi-annual sales conference, which includes bringing reps from all of Raincoast's publishers to speak to the sales reps about the new titles each season.

Raincoast also has three in-house publicists who work on the marketing of Raincoast's titles, including planning launches and other promotions in Canada. In April

³⁵ Tabassum Siddiqui, "Penguin Canada to Distribute Bloomsbury," *Quill & Quire*, May 2, 2008, http://www.quillandquire.com/news/article.cfm?article_id=9916.

³⁶ "Distribution Changes: Raincoast," *Quill & Quire*, January 16, 2009, http://www.quillandquire.com/news/article.cfm?article_id=10449.

³⁷ Scott MacDonald, "Raincoast Hires New Sales Director," *Quill & Quire*, October 3, 2006, http://www.quillandquire.com/news/article.cfm?article_id=7413.

2008, Raincoast expanded its sales force by hiring Jennifer Hinnell as Special Sales Manager. The position was developed to “[target] corporate sales and custom publishing... [and identify] non-traditional revenue sources.”³⁸ This position was created in the wake of the addition of Moleskine, “the Milan-based manufacturer of oilcloth-covered notebooks,”³⁹ as one of Raincoast’s distributed publishers. Kate Walker & Co. has been using book-related items like notebooks as a way to enter alternative markets such as art supplies stores, art galleries, and museums, and it is a skill the reps pride themselves upon. They now share this task with Raincoast’s in-house sale force.

Additionally, Raincoast has a National Accounts Manager. This position is currently filled by Peter MacDougall, son of Raincoast owner and president Allan MacDougall. His job is to present “to key accounts like Costco and Indigo,”⁴⁰ something that Kate Walker & Co.’s Toronto reps typically do for their clients. However, in the business of representing publishers, exceptions are often the rule, and clients like Raincoast are an example of how all contracts need to be customized to a client’s specific needs.

d) D&M Publishers Inc.

Another publisher that has chosen to split its sales representation between an in-house team and Kate Walker & Co. is D&M Publishers Inc., formerly Douglas & McIntyre

³⁸ Stuart Woods, “Raincoast Hires Special Sales Manager,” *Quill & Quire*, April 11, 2008, http://www.quillandquire.com/news/article.cfm?article_id=9866.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Melanie Mah, “Raincoast Fills National Accounts Manager Post,” *Quill & Quire*, March 10, 2006, http://www.quillandquire.com/news/article.cfm?article_id=7093.

Publishers Group.⁴¹ D&M is an excellent example of the complexities of distribution and sales representation. D&M comprises three imprints: Douglas & McIntyre, Greystone, and the newly acquired New Society Press.⁴² It is also the Canadian distributor for American presses Atlas & Co. and Farrar Straus & Giroux (FSG). FSG, a publisher with the Macmillan group, has four imprints of its own and distributes in USA for four publishers. D&M has the right to distribute and sell most titles from FSG and its imprints in Canada.

D&M, whose distribution in Canada is provided by HarperCollins Distribution, has split up its sales representation between its in-house Western sales manager, Richard Nadeau; its National Accounts Manager, Bruce Martin; Kate Walker & Co.; and Hornblower. Kate Walker & Co. represents D&M “in the western provinces, BC to NW Ontario, Yukon and Northwest Territory” and shares accounts in the Metro Vancouver area with Nadeau.⁴³ Hornblower represents D&M in the rest of Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada, with the exception of some Toronto accounts and National Accounts. Bruce Martin sells to Indigo/Chapters, Costco, and major wholesalers like HDS Retail, the supplier for airport stores.⁴⁴

⁴¹ D&M Publishers Inc. “Media Release: Douglas & McIntyre Becomes D&M Publishers Inc.”

⁴² Judith and Christopher Plant, “New Society Enters New Phase,”

<http://www.newsociety.com/New-Society-Enters-New-Phase.pdf>. According to Jennifer Gauthier, Sales Coordinator for D&M, New Society Press has not yet been fully integrated into D&M. They are currently continuing to perform their own sales and marketing. Incidentally, their sales representation is also handled by Kate Walker & Co. (Jennifer Gauthier, interview with Leslie Bootle, February 8, 2009.)

⁴³ Walker-Bootle email, January 23, 2009.

⁴⁴ Jennifer Gauthier, information interview with Leslie Bootle, February 8, 2009.

Kate Walker & Co. used to sell D&M to libraries, but D&M has since taken on that market itself. Nadeau sells to the Vancouver Public Library and Martin sells to the Toronto Public Library; it is unknown if D&M visits other library systems as well. This is a unique arrangement specific to D&M, and like Raincoast, it has a lot to do with the history these two companies share.

e) Harbour Publishing

Harbour Publishing, a regional press that publishes books about BC, was founded by Howard and Mary White in 1974. Howard White has been applauded by the Canadian Historical Association as “a tireless promoter and creator of quality British Columbia regional history.”⁴⁵ Kate Walker & Co., who has been representing Harbour since 1992, is its sole sales representation across Canada. However, Vici Johnstone, Harbour’s General Manager and the publisher of Caitlin Press (distributed by Harbour), sells Harbour’s list to Indigo/Chapters herself. For her, “the key to sales is the personal attention. I know there are theories that we’re moving away from that in this age of digital information, but my experience is the more you do..., the more you sell.”⁴⁶ She speaks highly of Kate Walker & Co. reps, but says that it is important for Harbour to present to Indigo/Chapters personally because “it makes us stand out from the hundreds of publishers out there, and even on Kate’s list it makes us stand out... we’re still humans and we’re driven by relationships.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Canadian Historical Association, “Harbour Publishing – About Us,” Harbour Publishing, <http://www.harbourpublishing.com/about.html>.

⁴⁶ Vici Johnstone, interview with Leslie Bootle, February 9, 2009.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

It is for that reason that Johnstone attends some of the regional trade fairs and sets up a Harbour booth, frequently next to the Kate Walker & Co. booth. She regularly goes to book fairs such as the Western Book Reps Association's BC Book Fair in various BC locations, Book Expo Canada in Toronto (until its discontinuation in 2009), and the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association trade shows in Oregon and Washington. As Johnstone puts it, "because Harbour is such a regional-specific publisher, we really like to be in touch with the booksellers, so I see what I do here, and with Chapters, as kind of a value-add."⁴⁸ While she recognizes that Kate Walker & Co. reps are equipped with enough information to field questions from customers, they do not always have the table space to display books from every publisher they represent. For important fairs in Harbour's region, Johnstone can display the books as well as answer questions. When the talk turns to sales, Johnstone refers them to Kate Walker & Co. to "let them start developing a relationship."⁴⁹

Johnstone is happy to come out and make direct contact with her customers, and insists that her presence at the shows does not indicate a lack of confidence in her sales reps. What she takes out of exhibiting is different than what Kate Walker & Co. does. Johnstone is looking for two-way communication with booksellers; she can provide them with information about Harbour's books, but also seeks specific feedback which can help shape the way it publishes in the future. She believes that it is Kate Walker & Co.'s job to sell, not necessarily to provide feedback for publishers, although it is capable of and willing to do that. Because Harbour's list is so specific to BC, Johnstone sees it as a big mistake for it to

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

not be directly in touch with bookstores, and that doing so is “one of the things that makes Harbour successful.”⁵⁰

f) Services to publishers

Kate Walker & Co. offers cross-Canada representation, including to the Yukon and Northwest Territories, every season.⁵¹ Its reps sell both frontlist and backlist titles to a variety of different accounts. It attends trade and gift shows, provides marketing information and assistance, and offers publicity and author services if necessary, such as escorting authors to events. Its role is to be the reps of the publisher on the ground, and frequently that extends beyond sales.

For many publishers, Kate Walker & Co. provides feedback about book ideas, sales trends, cover design, and marketing possibilities based on its experience with retailers. Sometimes its role is to help the publisher think about what the market for each book is: who should be reading it and who is going to ask for it in stores.⁵² It facilitates events with bookstores, which includes initiating co-op and advertising proposals, and author promotion such as book signings. Kate Walker & Co. annually updates a binder given to all of its publishers called the Kate Walker & Co. Survival Guide: “a publisher’s guide to the Canadian marketplace, which includes Store Profiles, Info on Trade & Wholesaler Co-op, Reading Series & Writers Festivals and much more.”⁵³ It also provides a national sales

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Kate Walker & Company, Ltd., “Request For Proposal.”

⁵² Walker-Bootle interview, June 5, 2008.

⁵³ Kate Walker & Company, Ltd., “Request For Proposal.”

report every month for its publishers, which lets them know where the reps have been and what they have been doing. The report includes sections on New Accounts and Account News, Areas Visited, Bestsellers from our Publishers, Library News, Trade News, and Dates to Note.⁵⁴ Kate Walker & Co. also attends a selection of trade shows across the country (see Table 3). This list does not include the provincial book fairs attended by reps each season.

Table 3. Trade shows regularly attended by Kate Walker & Co. as of 2007

| NAME OF SHOW | LOCATION |
|---|------------------------------|
| Canadian Museums Association Show | Toronto |
| Canadian Gift & Tableware Association (CGTA) | Toronto |
| Ontario Library Association | Toronto |
| Reading For the Love of It | Toronto |
| Alberta Gift Show | Edmonton |
| Vancouver Gift Show | Vancouver |
| Canadian Museums Association Show | Vancouver |
| British Columbia Library Association Conference | Various locations in BC |
| Library Services Centre Children's Display | Various locations in Ontario |
| Book Expo America | Various locations in USA |
| Book Expo Canada (up until 2009) | Toronto |

g) Requirements from publishers

In order to perform their job, Kate Walker & Co. reps need specific sets of information from publishers about their books, terms of sale, and discounts. Each season, representatives from Kate Walker & Co.'s publisher clients meet with the agency to introduce the new titles at what is known as "sales conference." They meet as far in advance

⁵⁴ Ibid.

as they can to give the reps time to get to know the list and ultimately to sell it, which often means meeting before book covers and publishers' catalogues have been finalized. Typically they meet in November for the Spring season and April for the Fall season. It begins with six or seven days of sales conference meetings in Vancouver. All of Kate Walker & Co.'s publishers who are based in the West send representatives to Vancouver for their allotted meeting time. Following the sales conference in Vancouver is another sales conference in Toronto for several days for the publishers based in Eastern Canada. As many Kate Walker & Co. reps as possible attend these conferences, although scheduling conflicts are remedied by sending delegates from an office.

Meetings typically take place at the Kate Walker & Co. offices, with the Raincoast portion of the meeting being the exception. Raincoast hosts its section of sales conference in Vancouver. Of the six or seven days spent in Vancouver, the presentations from Raincoast publishers take up four days. Coordinated by sales manager Sandy Cooper, representatives from Raincoast's 21 publishers present their lists to the reps. At the Raincoast part of sales conference, Kate Walker & Co. is joined by Hornblower as well as the Raincoast sales, marketing, and publicity staff. The content of the presentations is similar to the presentations of the smaller publishers, except that the individual publishers provide details about the books, while Raincoast provides details about the marketing plans and past sales data.

At sales conference, the publishers will hand out their new season's catalogues, or the closest thing to it that they have prepared at that point. They go through the titles with the reps to provide additional information over and above the catalogue copy. Important pieces

of information for the reps include details about where the author lives or has lived, any existing bestselling titles that the new title can be compared to, and any anecdotes about the author or the creation of the book that might stick in a bookseller's head. The publisher also communicates marketing information about the title, such as the publicity plans, author tours, potential reviews, excerpts in magazines or newspapers, planned advertising, or book launch particulars. These details show the reps which books the publishers consider their lead titles. Publishers anticipate that their lead titles will be the top sellers for the season, and expect them to receive an equivalent amount of attention from the reps.

Kate Walker & Co. also likes to learn about future plans for books in series, as well as any sales data that can be shared. The reps like to know how many copies were sold or what the sell-through was for any previous books in the same series or by the same author, as well as any trends in sales for a particular genre or type of book that might be applicable. Not all publishers calculate this information and make it available to the reps, and those that do have their own way of calculating, so there is rarely consistency between publishers. However, the reps prefer sales figures to be available, because for some customers, solid sales figures are a more convincing point than a description of the book.

Publishers vary greatly in the types of sales materials they provide to the reps. Kate Walker & Co. prefers to receive as many samples as possible, which the reps will take to buying appointments to show customers. For non-fiction works, it helps to have a full list of the credentials of the author to show why he or she is an expert in his or her field and a table of contents to lay out what is covered in the book. For books that rely heavily on illustrations or photographs, the reps depend upon having galleys, F&Gs, or some other type

of samples of the work. Some publishers provide copies of galleys for each rep to take away with them, while others may only have prepared enough to pass around one copy at sales conference.

Fiction can be the most challenging book category to sell, and the reps rely on an author's previous works, praise the author has received, an outline of the plot, and comparable titles. Some publishers will give out sample chapters for their fiction, which help reps get a flavour of the work. The reps appreciate receiving advance reading copies (ARCs) from publishers and they put them to good use: after being read by the reps, the ARCs are passed on to key booksellers.

Sales conference is also an opportunity for Kate Walker & Co. and the publishers to provide a report of how the last season has been going and to share feedback. For example, at the Spring 2009 sales conference in November 2008, Kate Walker & Co. communicated with one of its publishers that the reps had a hard time selling this publisher's new non-fiction line from Fall 2008. They did not get to see sample pages early enough, so the booksellers could not visualize the books. Also, the books were late arriving from the printers, so the reps felt that they missed the window for the Fall 2008 ordering season. They proposed to the publisher that together they work on re-presenting the books with the Spring 2009 list by tying them in with some current events and coming up with a new sell sheet. Plus, because they had the finished copies by then, they would be able to show them to their customers. The publisher agreed and came up with a new campaign for the non-fiction books.

After sales conference, Kate Walker & Co. requires finished copies of publishers' catalogues. They need to receive catalogues by a certain date in order to put together packages for Canadian Day group presentations and to mail out to all of their contacts. This is quite a significant undertaking; 31 publishers each submit their catalogue, plus additional catalogues for each of their distributed publishers. Raincoast used to create their own catalogue which included all of their distributed publishers, but since the cancellation of their publishing program, they use their publishers' original catalogues, so that is at minimum an additional 20 catalogues for Kate Walker & Co. If publishers are late in getting their catalogues to Kate Walker & Co., it either holds up the agency's catalogue mailing or causes the publisher to miss the main mail-out entirely.

Kate Walker & Co. reps also need to know the terms of sale that publishers are prepared to offer. The publishers work out a discount schedule with Kate Walker & Co. when they sign their contract. Table 4 presents an example of a discount schedule, although the terms vary between publishers. Sales conference is also the time that Kate Walker & Co. negotiates rep specials. These are specials the reps can offer customers for a certain period of time that are greater discounts than typically ordered, and usually require a minimum amount of books per order.

Table 4. Sample discount schedule

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Trade | 1 - 249 40%, 250 + 45% |
| Chain | 45% |
| Wholesale | 50% |
| Library | 35% |
| School | 35% |
| Shipping | Free freight |
| Returns | From 3 to 12 months from date of invoice. |

Source: Kate Walker & Company, Ltd., "Request For Proposal."

As a commissioned sales agency, Kate Walker & Co. receives compensation from publishers in the form of earned commission on sales. To determine their earnings, each publisher gives Kate Walker & Co. sales commission reports which come in different formats and contain different information. Each rep sets an annual sales goal related to their territory, and because they do not see all of the orders placed by their customers, they rely on these reports to track their achievement. While compensation details are not publicly available, Walker acknowledges that all Kate Walker & Co. staff are salaried and receive bonuses.

III. INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORE CUSTOMERS

While there can be flux in the publisher's lines that the agency represents, there is a certain stability in the long-term relationships that Kate Walker & Co. has developed with its independent bookstore customers. These relationships are part of what makes Kate Walker & Co. a valuable asset to its publisher clients, who want their lists represented by someone in whom booksellers have confidence. Kate Walker & Co. considers all of its

accounts valuable, regardless of their size or amount of sales, which means that even the smallest retailers are not overlooked.

In return, booksellers think highly of Kate Walker & Co.; Ria Bleumer, manager of Duthie Books in Vancouver, calls Kate Walker & Co. reps “exemplary.”⁵⁵ She appreciates the effort they put into maintaining a personal connection with booksellers, which includes following up on sales presentations and paying attention to the smallest details. Bleumer also reports that the agency is “committed to providing the best possible service and is committed to the importance of a lasting book industry.”⁵⁶

Duthie Books is not the only bookstore to recognize Kate Walker & Co. as an outstanding agency. Annually, the Canadian Bookseller’s Association (CBA) hosts the Libris awards, which honour “the best among the chain of talented professionals who deliver great books to Canadian readers.”⁵⁷ The award for Sales Representative of the Year rotates between four different geographic regions, where booksellers within those regions vote for one of three nominees. In 2008, Dot Middlemass of Kate Walker & Co. won the award for the BC region. Current Kate Walker & Co. rep Rorie Bruce won the award in 2000 while working for the Literary Press Group, while Maryann Bredin, up until recently the Kate Walker & Co. rep for Alberta, won the award in 2001 while working for Stoddart & Company Ltd. Additionally, Susan Toy, the current Kate Walker & Co. rep in Alberta, won

⁵⁵ Ria Bleumer, interview with Leslie Bootle, February 8, 2009.

⁵⁶ Ria Bleumer, email message to Leslie Bootle, February 16, 2009.

⁵⁷ Canadian Booksellers Association, “CBA Libris Awards 2008,” <http://www.cbabook.org/libris-currentwinners.html>.

it in 1994, while former Kate Walker & Co. rep Peter MacDougall was nominated in 2004.

This shows that Kate Walker & Co. reps are truly valued by the bookselling community.

Small and independent bookstore accounts “are treated with the same accord as National accounts, but require a different level of attention.”⁵⁸ For Kate Walker & Co., an emphasis is placed on maintaining these relationships; the agency is unique in part because the reps travel so much, and want to go out and see where each bookstore does its business.⁵⁹ Each season, the reps begin a rotation of visiting customers for buying appointments. This begins with an initial sales presentation, followed by meetings that can take various forms on an ongoing basis. Kate Walker & Co. recognizes that each of its accounts performs its purchasing in a specific way, so the agency’s flexibility around individual customers’ needs is imperative.

a) Canadian Day

One way of initiating sales presentations at the start of each season is a group presentation called “Canadian Day.” This concept began with Jim Douglas close to 50 years ago, when he would invite five or six Vancouver booksellers to his house to learn about the new season’s list.⁶⁰ Since then, these presentations have evolved and remain popular in Western Canada.

Canadian Day is an opportunity for purchasers from bookstores and libraries to come together for a presentation focusing mainly on the upcoming Canadian titles of note. Canadian Day happens once per season in Vancouver; up to 100 people attend and all the

⁵⁸ Kate Walker & Company Ltd., “Request for Proposal.”

⁵⁹ Walker-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Vancouver reps present portions of their publishers' lists. It typically begins early in the morning and is finished in time for a catered lunch provided by Kate Walker & Co. The reps do not present the entire lists of every publisher, but they create take-home packages for attendees with a copy of each publisher's catalogue. The attendees include bookstore buyers who will later be visited for a buying appointment and are looking for an overview of the Canadian content for the season, librarians who value any advance information they can get about upcoming lists from publishers, and employees of chain stores like Indigo/Chapters, who use the presentation as an opportunity to learn about titles that they might see in their stores, or to make requests for titles with particularly pertinent regional content.

The draw for booksellers and librarians is that this day is specifically designed to highlight Canadian content; most bookstores and libraries have special Canadian sections. The reps do not only present the books from Canadian publishers, but they scour the lists for books with any connection to Canada. For example, the current majority of Raincoast's publishers are American, but the Kate Walker & Co. representatives will go through all of the Raincoast publishers' catalogues to find any authors who have lived in Canada, any books that might also appeal to Canadians, or any books on topics that are hot in both the US and Canada. It is the job of the reps to know what the attendees expect, and to be able to sift through the information to present what they want to hear, and also suggest a few new things they might be interested in.

Because of the reps' ability to distill the information effectively and hold the attendees interest, Canadian Day is very well received in Vancouver. Ria Bleumer of Duthie

Books regularly attends Canadian Day because it speeds up her buying process.⁶¹ In addition to providing the attendees with an accessible way to preview the next season's books, it initiates a social gathering where librarians, independent booksellers, and members of the bookstore chains come together based on their shared interest in Canadian books. For Bleumer, this is as big a perk as hearing about the books; the opportunity to do some public relations and liaise with other booksellers does not come often.⁶²

For Kate Walker & Co., Canadian Day is also a chance to bring their showroom to their customers, and they set up displays around the room for attendees to browse during lunch. Everyone likes to see what the new books will look like, so the arrival of Canadian Day is added incentive for publishers to produce advance samples for their reps. Any other material that can be used promotionally is given away in prize draws.

Kate Walker & Co. also holds a Canadian Day in Courtenay for librarians and booksellers on Vancouver Island, and formerly held one in Victoria. Canadian Days have happened in Calgary and Edmonton, and the rep in the prairie provinces visits a couple of places in Saskatchewan to offer presentations similar to Canadian Day.

b) Buying appointments

Canadian Day is an excellent way to tailor a group presentation around a common theme. However, Kate Walker & Co. reps also rely on their ability to tailor buying appointments to individual clients. As the season starts, reps will set up meetings with their

⁶¹ Bleumer-Bootle email, February 16, 2009.

⁶² Ibid.

accounts, typically at the retail location. The agency knows that it will do a better job selling books having seen what a customer looks at everyday and what his or her reality is.⁶³ The reps schedule road trips to fit in as many stores on one trip as possible.

Sometimes the reps will conduct their buying appointments at book fairs, which happen once each season in most provinces across the country. They provide an opportunity for sales reps to meet booksellers in a central location. For example, the Western Reps Association puts on the BC Book Fair each season; it rotates between Vancouver, Victoria, and Kelowna. Booksellers from locations around the province will travel to that city for three days to meet with sales reps from a variety of different companies. For many other agencies, this is their primary contact with their customers. Kate Walker & Co.'s goal is to have reps visit each of their accounts once per year, but because there are two buying seasons, sometimes they also conduct appointments at these fairs.

Kate Walker & Co. likes to attend these shows because it is good for its profile and provides an opportunity to meet and recruit new clients. For a new bookstore, attending a book fair is the best way to learn about how and where to purchase inventory, so Kate Walker & Co. frequently makes new contacts at these events.

Because the Vancouver and Toronto Kate Walker & Co. offices have showrooms stocked with book and giftware samples, some local customers prefer to visit the showroom for their buying appointments. Reps cannot tote samples of everything to each bookstore, so it is an attractive option for those who like to see all of the merchandise.

⁶³ Walker-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

The goal of the buying appointment is to help the bookseller buy books that he or she can sell.⁶⁴ For rep Dot Middlemass, “Every bookstore is different. At first you let the bookseller guide you as to what works for their store... I have to walk the fine line between selling the list for the publisher, and selling a bookstore books that they can sell that they’re not going to return.”⁶⁵ In the experience of Sarah Harvey, a former trade book buyer at the University of Victoria Bookstore, it is important to be clear with reps from the beginning in order to establish a good relationship.⁶⁶ Booksellers, who may see upwards of twenty reps each season,⁶⁷ will let their reps know which categories of books are working or not working for them, and they do not want their time wasted. Harvey reports that “there were reps I would not see because they wouldn’t pay any attention to my fairly explicit needs.”⁶⁸ That is a situation to be avoided at all costs; when thirty publishers are shut out of a bookstore because the rep does not have a good relationship with the bookseller, it is a serious and costly issue.

Buying appointments consist of the sales reps taking the booksellers through their list of publishers one catalogue at a time. Reps will either bring a customized package of catalogues for the bookstore when they come for their appointment, or they will have shipped it to the retailer in advance. The reps will share information about the titles that they learned at sales conference, as well as mention reasons why this particular store may

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Sarah Harvey, interview with Leslie Bootle, February 3, 2009.

⁶⁷ Bleumer-Bootle email, February 16, 2009.

⁶⁸ Harvey-Bootle interview, February 3, 2009.

have success with certain titles. An easy way to waste a bookseller's time is to simply read them the catalogue.⁶⁹

For Middlemass, the key to success at her job is honesty: ultimately the ordering decisions are made by the bookseller, but if she thinks an error has been made, she will point it out. Middlemass recalls one occasion where her account had completed their order form for the season at Canadian Day based on the group presentation. She noticed that they did not order a lead title from a major regional publisher which was sure to be a "big book," as well as coming up short by two books to reach a greater discount threshold. She followed up with the bookseller and pointed out her observations, and was applauded for her efforts on their behalf.⁷⁰ This also shows how a good rep's job is not finished after the buying appointment; customers are accounts that need to be monitored and followed closely to ensure that their relationship remains intact and strong.

It is at these buying appointments that understanding the bookstore's market, niche, and location are particularly useful. Harvey notes that she "respected the reps that came in and said, 'We won't need to do that, that's not your market.'"⁷¹ However, Harvey also wanted to receive suggestions about other books that might work well in her store, and reports that a skilled rep can do that without a bookseller even being aware. This is the level that Kate Walker & Co. reps strive to achieve with their customers.

Following the buying appointment, some booksellers will place orders immediately with the rep, which the rep will send over to the publishers. If a customer is taking

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Middlemass-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

⁷¹ Harvey-Bootle interview, February 3, 2009.

advantage of a rep special, then the order is usually placed through the reps. Some customers will send orders to the publishers directly. As such, Kate Walker & Co. reps do not always see how many of each title their customers are buying right away.

c) Additional services

In many industries, the sales and marketing departments work closely together to promote and sell a product. In the case of the Canadian trade book industry, when sales agencies are hired to work for publishers that do their own marketing, it can be challenging to determine where to draw the line. For Kate Walker & Co., part of selling its publishers' lists includes marketing the books. While the publisher is able to do things on its end that include putting together publicity campaigns, booking advertising and co-op, and organizing author tours, Kate Walker & Co. focuses more on working with the booksellers to help them market the books.⁷²

Kate Walker & Co. reps want to help the bookstores find the people who will read their books.⁷³ Some of Kate Walker & Co.'s clients publish lines of books which can benefit from specific merchandising such as floor displays and rotating racks, and the reps' knowledge of their customers' stores helps them to suggest items like this. There are other ways to reach the book-buying public than trying to bring them into a bookstore. Kate Walker & Co. has facilitated opportunities like book sales at conferences; if an author is part of a panel or conference, it is an excellent opportunity to sell his or her books to the

⁷²Walker-Bootle interview, June 5, 2008.

⁷³Ibid.

attendees. Small bookstores are not always able to keep track of events like this, so all parties benefit when Kate Walker & Co. presents them with an occasion to set up a vendor table.

The publisher, Kate Walker & Co., and the bookseller all have the same goal of selling as many books as possible to the end user, so Kate Walker & Co. is often the facilitator to get all three parties working together. The agency receives marketing and publicity updates from its publishers which it passes along to its accounts. It also amalgamates this information into a newsletter called Promo News, which goes out to all Kate Walker & Co.'s accounts. It is customized by region and provides a synopsis of local, national, and international publicity and media attention garnered by both frontlist and backlist titles, as well as any awards or honours news. It is designed to be a quick read but a useful tool to alert booksellers to the need to stock titles appropriately. Because this is a service to all booksellers, Kate Walker & Co. does not report on any events that are happening at specific bookstores, like launches or signings, so as to not show preferential treatment to any customers. Booksellers appreciate these regular updates; Middlemass reports that "often [she]'ll go into a bookstore and it is tacked up in the backroom by the phone."⁷⁴

Kate Walker & Co. also prepares lists of books from their publishers' lists categorized by subject matter.⁷⁵ Bookstores can use these lists to check their stock in certain sections, to pull books for a themed display, or to hand out to teachers or professionals who

⁷⁴ Middlemass-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

⁷⁵ See Table 5.

may shop in their stores. These lists also assist reps when approaching retailers other than bookstores. Alternative markets are often targeted based on the type of products they sell, so having a list based on a specific subject can make the introduction into book sales easier. For example, an art gallery that specializes in First Nations art could be presented the First Nations' lists as a way to offer books that complement their collection. Heike Kapp, Kate Walker & Co.'s office manager, updates the lists each season; the frontlist titles are always indicated in bold for customers who continuously order from a specific category. The choices of which lists to create comes from demand from customers as well as what appears on the publishers' lists each season; if a trendy topic is emerging in multiple titles it may merit the creation of a new subject list.

Table 5. Book lists available from Kate Walker & Co. as of February 2009

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| ABC | Forestry | Quilting |
| Alberta | Frieda Kahlo | Railway |
| Aviation | Gardening | Rocks & Minerals |
| Baby | Gay & Lesbian | Scrapbooking |
| BC Books for Kids | Golf | Seafood Cookbooks |
| BC History | Green | Sleep |
| BC Travel Guides | Grief | Spa |
| Bears | Historical Fiction for | Surfing |
| Birds | Kids | Titanic |
| Boys Who Like to Read | Hockey | Vancouver |
| Calendars | Holocaust | Vancouver Island |
| Canadian Art | Hot Books by Cool | Weddings |
| Cancer | Chefs | Western |
| Cookbooks for Kids | Jane Austen | Whales & Dolphins |
| Dinosaurs | Judaica | Wine, Beer & Spirits |
| Eco-Gastronomy | Kayaking & Canoeing | Yoga |
| Emily Carr | Klondike & Goldrush | |
| Erotica | Knitting & Crocheting | Seasonal: |
| Explorers | Manitoba & | Christmas |
| First Nations Art | Saskatchewan | Father's Day |

| | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| First Nations Culture & Customs | Northern/Polar/Arctic Olympics | Halloween Mother's Day |
| First Nations Fiction & Poetry | Ontario Pirates | Remembrance Day |

IV. NATIONAL ACCOUNT CUSTOMERS

Kate Walker & Co. also sells to national chains of stores like Indigo/Chapters and Costco. These accounts are often called national or key accounts, and their buying procedure differs from that of independent bookstores. For Indigo/Chapters and Costco, national and regional purchasing is done out of their head offices in Toronto and Ottawa, respectively. These accounts are seen as early in the season as possible because they require advance information. They also necessitate a great deal of follow-up, and contact is maintained on a regular, sometimes daily, basis.⁷⁶

Indigo/Chapters has different category buyers that the reps out of the Toronto office meet with. With the exception of the publishers who prefer to present to the national accounts themselves, Saffron Beckwith sells the adult lists, Karen Beattie sells the kids lists, Morgen Young sells the calendars, and Claire Blicher sells the gift lists.⁷⁷

Indigo/Chapters also has regional advisors that other Kate Walker & Co. reps work with. Dave Reynolds is the regional advisor for Alberta and British Columbia. He is based in Calgary, so Susan Toy is the rep that meets with him, with notes from Ali Hewitt (BC) and Rorie Bruce (Prairies). In preparation for Toy's meeting, each of these reps fills out the

⁷⁶ Kate Walker & Company, Ltd., "Request For Proposal."

⁷⁷ Saffron Beckwith, email message to Leslie Bootle, February 17, 2009.

Indigo buyer's grid for their regions, writing down every title that is relevant with as much specific information in the comments field as possible. After Toy presents the list to Reynolds, he waits for the buying decisions out of head office to determine what regional titles he can add.⁷⁸ He also makes a point of following up with the managers of the Indigo/Chapters stores in his region to let them know what regional books have been shipped to them and why.

In addition to seeing Indigo/Chapters staff at Canadian Day presentations, Kate Walker & Co. reps frequently visit store locations to drop off reading copies and keep in touch with store managers. If a publisher has purchased co-op placement for a book, the reps will check stores during the allotted time to ensure that the title is appropriately displayed.

Costco has emerged as another major retailer for books, largely because they can price their books more cheaply than most bookstores: "Costco generally limits its markup to 8–15% above cost (reportedly 12% on books, as compared to the 40%+ markup applied by traditional booksellers)."⁷⁹ Most outlets only carry between 300–600 titles, so space is extremely limited.⁸⁰ Costco tends to purchase only the best-sellers or general interest types of books, and will not purchase anything with suggestive content or cover images. Titles are given four weeks or less on the tables, and if they do not sell, they are returned in large quantity. The threat of these returns is impetus to work closely with Costco buyers to come

⁷⁸ Susan Toy, email message to Leslie Bootle, February 22, 2009.

⁷⁹ Department of Canadian Heritage. "Non-Traditional Retail Channels," Canadian Heritage, http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/padie-bpidp/rep/rapp-rep_07/108-eng.cfm.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

up with the most realistic orders possible. However, selling into Costco can pay off: “as of April 2007, Costco operates 71 stores throughout Canada, and is estimated to hold 10–15% of consumer book sales (and considerably more for some larger publishers).”⁸¹ Saffron Beckwith sells to Costco for Kate Walker & Co.

There are other national accounts that specific Kate Walker & Co. reps take care of. Kate Walker sells to Amazon for some clients, although most of Kate Walker & Co.’s publishers sell directly to Amazon. Walker’s role is to facilitate the set-up of an account and “to get communications happening.”⁸² Saffron Beckwith sells to HDS Retail, “a chain of stores that operates a number of newsstands and airport bookstores across Canada as well as the rest of the world.”⁸³ HDS stores include Relay, Virgin, XPress, and Great Canadian News Co.⁸⁴ Beckwith sells to them through their national office in Toronto.

V. LIBRARY CUSTOMERS

Public libraries are another lucrative market for Kate Walker & Co. While many publishers prefer to concentrate their efforts on bookstore sales rather than libraries, which allow multiple readers to access single copies of books, there is a solid argument for not ignoring the library market. Libraries do not always purchase single copies of books; some library systems buy 50 or more copies of some titles.⁸⁵ Even small libraries may buy several

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Walker-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

⁸³ Kate Walker & Co., “Kate Walker & Co. Survival Guide.”

⁸⁴ HDS Retail North America, “What We Do,” <http://www.hdsrna.com/main.html>.

⁸⁵ Mark Sexton. “Replacing the Myths About Marketing to Libraries,” The Combined Book Exhibit, <http://www.combinedbook.com/myths.php>.

copies of titles that they expect will result in high circulation, and if a title belongs in the reference department, additional copies will be needed for public circulation.⁸⁶ Perhaps most importantly, library sales do not result in returns.

Libraries typically order through wholesalers because it simplifies the ordering procedure and is cost effective: they can combine orders from a range of publishers so that they do not need to worry about meeting publishers' minimums to get a good discount. According to Ren Speer at United Library Services, a library wholesaler in Western Canada, wholesalers also offer services like uniform cataloguing and processing, and advanced electronic ordering systems.⁸⁷ Additionally, they can prepare the books for libraries with hard-cover library binding.⁸⁸

The wholesalers decide what to order from the publisher based on what librarians are requesting, so it is Kate Walker & Co.'s job to generate demand amongst the librarians for its clients' books. Kate Walker & Co. presents the lists to libraries by calling on them individually, or bringing them together for a group presentation.⁸⁹ Librarians need to hear the details about the books as well as any relevant and contemporary tie-ins that might lead librarians to recommend them to library patrons, just as booksellers use that information to hand-sell to their customers.

Kate Walker & Co. has invested significant energy in two unique ways to present its lists to librarians en masse. The first is Canadian Day; approximately 40% of the attendees of

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ren Speer, email message to Leslie Bootle, February 17, 2009.

⁸⁸ Middlemass-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

⁸⁹ Walker-Bootle email, January 23, 2009.

Canadian Day in Vancouver are librarians.⁹⁰ As far as Walker is aware, Kate Walker & Co. is one of the only agencies that offer group presentations like Canadian Day to booksellers and librarians.⁹¹ Walker is “passionate about libraries,”⁹² which has impacted the way that Kate Walker & Co. does business. By inviting librarians to Canadian Day, Kate Walker & Co. provides them with valuable product knowledge, and they appreciate the attention.⁹³ Walker’s first boss in the industry, Keith Sacré at Williams Collins and Sons Ltd., came from the British tradition of books being important for children, and taught her that “very often children get their first access to books at the public library. It’s often where their love of books starts.”⁹⁴ Walker feels inspired by the incredible librarians she has met, particularly in smaller communities, where “they provide the heart for the community, the cultural centre. They know what’s going on.”⁹⁵ She describes how some small communities in BC do not have bookstores, but they have libraries that bring people together with programs like mommy-and-tot time and children’s summer reading programs.

In Eastern Canada, Kate Walker & Co. does not offer Canadian Days, but instead participates in something called the Dewey Divas and Dudes. According to their website:

We are a network of Canadian publishers’ reps who travel to library systems to give book talks about upcoming books for the season. We can speak about the upcoming blockbusters, midlist favourites, books suitable for book clubs, fiction, non-fiction,

⁹⁰ Walker-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Middlemass-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Walker-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

books for male readers, books for reluctant readers, YA crossover books and just darned good reads. We can also do a children's presentation.⁹⁶

Similar to Canadian Days, this is an opportunity for publishers' reps to highlight upcoming books from their publishers' lists. The Dewey Divas were founded in 2002 following a request from Margaret Henry, Coordinator of Adult Materials at the Toronto Public Library, for all the librarians and not just the buyers to hear about new books directly from the publisher.⁹⁷ The current Dewey Divas are Saffron Beckwith from Kate Walker & Co., Eleanor Denny from Simon & Schuster Canada, Ann Ledden from McArthur and Company, David MacMillan from HarperCollins Canada, Janet Murie from Scholastic Canada, Maylin Scott from Random House of Canada, Rosalyn Steele from H.B. Fenn & Company, Lahring Tribe from Random House of Canada, and Susan Wallace from Oxford University Press.⁹⁸

The Dewey Divas have had success in Eastern Canada because the librarians there are not as interested in coming together for a presentation from one agency like Kate Walker & Co., and prefer to have several different reps come to their library to make recommendations. The concentration of presentations has been heaviest in Ontario, but the Dewey Divas have also traveled to four other provinces.⁹⁹ Kate Walker & Co. estimates that the Dewey Divas reach one thousand librarians each year, and the presentations have proved

⁹⁶ Dewey Divas and Dudes, "DeweyDivasAndDudes.com: Who Are We?," <http://www.deweydivasanddudes.com/who.htm>.

⁹⁷ Micah Toub, "Song and Dance," *Quill & Quire*, Nov. 1 2004, http://www.quillandquire.com/news/article.cfm?article_id=6398.

⁹⁸ Dewey Divas and Dudes, "DeweyDivasAndDudes.com: Who Are We?"; Saffron Beckwith, email message to Leslie Bootle, March 26, 2009.

⁹⁹ Kate Walker & Company, Ltd., "Request For Proposal."

to be so valuable that some libraries have made it mandatory for their librarians to attend.¹⁰⁰

The presentation does not replace actual buying appointments with the boards that make the purchasing decisions, but is used instead as product knowledge.

According to Rosalyn Steele from H.B. Fenn & Company, the goal is to talk about books they have read and loved, not to deliver a sales pitch. Steele says that she tries to “pick a variety of genres within the adult book spectrum” to present, but that ultimately librarians come to know each rep’s personal preferences. That is ideal, because “you want people to trust you... to be confident in your recommendations.”¹⁰¹ In addition, the Dewey Divas operate a blog that lists all of their recommendations, and Beckwith has placed a link to her Dewey Diva recommendations on the Kate Walker & Co. website.¹⁰² The Dewey Divas were recognized for their efforts at the Ontario Library Association’s Super Conference on Jan. 29, 2009; they were awarded the Ontario Public Library Association’s Leadership in Adult Readers’ Advisory Award, as chosen by librarians. This award is typically won by librarians, so it is a significant accomplishment for this group of reps.

Walker and Middlemass have tried offering Dewey Divas presentations in Vancouver, but reverted to the popular Canadian Days.¹⁰³ Canadian Days have been happening for so long that librarians in the West have gotten used to them, and prefer that style of presentation.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Rosalyn Steele, interview with Leslie Bootle, January 30, 2009.

¹⁰² Saffron Beckwith, “Dewey Picks,” Kate Walker & Company, Ltd., <http://www.katewalker.com/dewey.asp>.

¹⁰³ Saffron Beckwith, interview with Leslie Bootle, January 30, 2009; Middlemass-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

VI. WHOLESALER CUSTOMERS

Kate Walker & Co. also presents its list to wholesalers. Kate Walker & Co.'s Survival Guide lists the five "top players" that libraries purchase from as United Library Services (ULS), National Book Service (NBS),¹⁰⁴ S&B Books, Library Services Centre (LSC) and Whitehots.¹⁰⁵ According to the Survival Guide, "discount and co-op are two central issues for library wholesalers. As they resell their books at a discount they require the highest discount possible."¹⁰⁶ Wholesalers issue catalogues and "hot lists" to keep the libraries aware of the key titles that they should be ordering; "for most wholesalers, their catalogues are their number one way to sell books and they reach thousands of people. It is important to have a place in these catalogues and support them with co-op."¹⁰⁷ According to Margaret Henry of the Toronto Public Library, the catalogues include titles whether publishers or their reps specifically submit them or not, but if there are particular titles that a publisher wishes to promote, they can do so by purchasing co-op advertising in the catalogues.¹⁰⁸ Kate Walker & Co. reps help facilitate the co-op arrangements, but ultimately it is the publisher that negotiates with the wholesalers.

After Kate Walker & Co. reps visit libraries, they follow up with wholesalers in the area to pass along observations from their meetings. Kate Walker & Co. will also pass along newsletters like Promo News to the wholesalers so that they can be aware of which titles are

¹⁰⁴ Since the publication of the Kate Walker & Co. Survival Guide, NBS ceased to operate on March 31, 2008 (National Book Service, "Public Library Home," <http://www.nbs.com/PL/NBShomePL.htm>.)

¹⁰⁵ Kate Walker & Co., "Kate Walker & Co. Survival Guide."

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

getting local, national, or international publicity. In return, wholesalers are able to anticipate interest levels for certain lists and can stock them accordingly “to allow for better fill rates and turnaround times”¹⁰⁹ when libraries place orders.

An issue that has come up recently with public libraries’ purchasing power is the importance of buying from Canadian vendors. Public libraries are issued public funds, and are thus obligated to use them to purchase books within Canada. However, there are a few libraries that choose to do their purchasing from American wholesalers, from whom they can get greater discounts. Their argument is that they need to be responsible to taxpayers by making the most of their funds. Kate Walker & Co. does not endorse this buying behaviour and refuses to visit libraries that do not buy from Canadian wholesalers. Her stance is that “taxpayers’ money needs to be spent in the country,”¹¹⁰ which aligns with the agency’s mission to support independent Canadian publishers and retailers. This is also Kate Walker & Co.’s way of showing its support for its Canadian wholesaler customers. ULS’s Ren Speer is adamant about sending a message to those libraries, because “this is a cultural business and to keep regional publishing alive and thriving, you need to keep purchasing dollars in Canada.”¹¹¹ One of the downfalls of purchasing south of the border is that regional collections become deprived of authentic content. As he puts it, in a BC collection of First Nations literature, “Do you want to have books on the Haida or the Navajo?”¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Ren Speer, email message to Leslie Bootle, February 17, 2009.

¹¹⁰ Walker-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

¹¹¹ Speer-Bootle email, February 17, 2009.

¹¹² Ibid.

In addition to library wholesalers, Kate Walker & Co. sells to mass market wholesalers and specialty wholesalers.¹¹³ Mass-market wholesalers like The News Group and Canada Mass Media Inc. (CMMI) “provide buying, inventory management, category management, and merchandising services for major non-specialist retailers in the mass market, grocery, drug, and convenience sectors.”¹¹⁴ These retailers include accounts like Zellers, Wal-Mart and London Drugs,¹¹⁵ where the wholesalers facilitate the shipping and fulfillment, such as stocking the bookshelves, checking quantities, and performing returns.¹¹⁶ This works well for non-traditional book markets because they need to do very little in order to be able to offer their customers books.

These wholesalers order in different ways than the bookstores; “they need the more broad-based titles and the titles that are going to get a lot of promo.”¹¹⁷ They may also be interested in regional books if purchasing for specific clients. Within Kate Walker & Co., Beckwith sells to CMMI, based out of Toronto, while Walker sells to The News Group. These mass-market wholesalers also sell magazines.

Specialty wholesalers vary in their markets. Some sell to small bookstores that are unable to meet the publishers’ ordering minimums, so they will go through a wholesaler to order from several publishers at once. As seen with publishers, wholesalers offer free freight once a minimum order amount is reached, and this can be more easily achieved for small

¹¹³ Walker-Bootle email, January 23, 2009.

¹¹⁴ Department of Canadian Heritage. “Non-Traditional Retail Channels.”

¹¹⁵ Ibid; Kate Walker & Co., “Kate Walker & Co. Survival Guide.”

¹¹⁶ Middlemass-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009; Walker-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

¹¹⁷ Middlemass-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

stores when they combine their orders from different publishers. In addition, wholesalers stock all of the titles in their own distribution centres, so they offer fast shipping.

VII) ALTERNATIVE MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

A growing area of business for Kate Walker & Co. is its gift business. It represents Galison and Peter Pauper Press, two companies that specialize in stationery and journals. These companies produce products as opposed to books, but products that many bookstores like to sell as add-on items. Kate Walker & Co. has a unique contract with these companies in that it provides sales representation for the bookstore market, but does not have rights to sell them into the gift market; Galison and Peter Pauper Press have different reps for the gift market. In addition to these companies, one of Raincoast's distributed lines is Moleskine, as mentioned earlier. These three stationery lines complement each other well, and provide enough range for Kate Walker & Co. to meet the selling interests of booksellers.

Kate Walker & Co. also sells book-related products from the companies Wonder-shirts, Carolyn Forsman, and Literary Luminaries. These companies offer t-shirts, jewelry, mugs, stationery, purses, and umbrellas with a distinct book or literary theme. Like the stationery companies above, these find homes in bookstores.

Kate Walker & Co. is "constantly looking for new markets and places to sell books,"¹¹⁸ and uses the breadth of its list to approach new retailers and introduce them to selling books. Its reps report that amongst their alternative markets, they have accounts such

¹¹⁸ Kate Walker & Company, Ltd., "Request For Proposal."

as “museums, art galleries, gift shops, cooking stores, [and even] delicatessens.”¹¹⁹ Selling into these markets requires background research on the part of the reps. For example, before meeting with a museum, a rep would look into upcoming exhibitions and search through his or her publishers’ frontlists and backlists to come up with a selection of titles to suggest to the museum buyer. Middlemass has had success with several local delicatessens because she got to know what types of food they sell and who their customers are, and then suggested cookbooks that would complement their menus.

Walker has noticed an increase in environmental stores in almost every province, where the retailer is “selling access to technology, and books can be a large part of that.”¹²⁰ Green-building stores, specialty lifestyle stores, and eco-friendly-themed gift shops are places that Kate Walker & Co. can sell its range of environmental, energy-aware and eco-gastronomy titles. The impetus for finding retailers for books comes from the books themselves; each season the reps challenge themselves to think about who the ideal customers are for the titles on their lists, and where those customers can be found.

It is not always easy to get a retailer to take on books when they are not traditionally part of its product line. For such occasions, Kate Walker & Co. has prepared an information sheet titled “Why sell books – when you’re not a bookstore?”¹²¹ The sheet outlines key information for retailers that will lead to success with books sales. It is not as simple as merely ordering some books; where the books are displayed, what kinds of promotion are

¹¹⁹ Middlemass-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

¹²⁰ Walker-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

¹²¹ Kate Walker & Company, Ltd., “Why sell books – when you’re not a bookstore?” (information sheet, Vancouver, BC).

allotted to them, and the awareness of staff about the titles significantly affect the chances of success for books outside of bookstores. Suggestions to group books with related items, place books face out as much as possible, and request reading copies for staff “keeners” have helped retailers feel more comfortable about the prospect of selling books.

VIII. COMPETITION

For sales reps, identifying their competition can be difficult. Because they have relationships with so many different clients and customers, there are many areas for competition. In order to get orders from booksellers, their publishers’ lists are competing with other publishers for shelf space. Sales reps compete for enough time with booksellers to be able to present their full lists. Kate Walker & Co. is also always aware of publishers who might be unhappy with their current sales representation and are looking for a change; as mentioned earlier, agencies’ lists of publishers are changing constantly. Kate Walker & Co. prides itself on the relationships that it has built with booksellers across Canada, which can be seen as a competitive edge over other sales reps: “Unlike many rep groups and publishers, we really do visit all of our accounts, big and small. While some organizations are turning their backs on smaller accounts, we see them as an excellent opportunity to develop sales.”¹²²

However, Kate Walker & Co. does not need external competition as its motivation to succeed: the reps’ biggest competition is themselves. “We’re only as good as our last list, our last six months of service to our customers,” says Walker. She disagrees that other sales reps are competition: “We represent different publishers; the booksellers have to talk to

¹²² Kate Walker & Company, Ltd., “Request For Proposal.”

everybody.”¹²³ This is echoed by Middlemass, who reports that in this industry, “people are your competition, but they’re also your colleagues.”¹²⁴ They don’t see a rivalry between factions, particularly because it such a friendly industry. For Middlemass, “the people make this business.”¹²⁵

IX. MARKETS OUTSIDE OF KATE WALKER & CO.’S SCOPE

Historically, Kate Walker & Co. is a commissioned rep agency for the Canadian trade market. This means that they do not represent academic or technical lines, do not have academic or educational market customers, and are not involved in the textbook market or course adoption sales. For the University presses that it represents, Kate Walker & Co. sells their trade lists, while those presses handle their own academic sales. However, Kate Walker & Co. remains aware of what is in demand in this market to help the reps propose books for trade sections of university bookstores.¹²⁶

Some of Kate Walker & Co.’s publishers may have additional sales reps for the educational market, like Orca Book Publishers, who publishes children’s books for the trade as well as the educational market. Kate Walker & Co. is interested in public school libraries, which is one of the reasons it exhibits at the Ontario Library Association’s Super Conference and the British Columbia Library Association’s conference every year. However, they do not call on schools to present lists. In addition, the agency is not involved in the Christian book

¹²³ Walker-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

¹²⁴ Middlemass-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Walker-Bootle interview, June 5, 2008.

market, which is dominated by Christian suppliers.¹²⁷ It also does not sell to large book clubs like Scholastic Book Club, a market typically pursued by the publishers themselves if they are interested.¹²⁸

Aside from some assistance in getting publishers set up to have their books appear on Amazon, Kate Walker & Co. does not sell to online retailers. Some of its bookstore customers have set up websites where they can sell books online as well as through their retail location, and the agency supports and encourages such diversification.

Kate Walker & Co. exhibits at regional trade book fairs, gift shows, and provincial library association conferences, depending on their schedules. However, there are many conferences and trade shows that it chooses not to attend. One reason for this is that it wants to avoid overlapping with its bookstore customers who may be at the show selling books. If an event has a designated bookseller, such as wellness conferences or school conferences, Kate Walker & Co. might instead work with it to insure that it has ordered enough books to meet the demand of the show, rather than to similarly exhibit.¹²⁹ The reps also need to plan their time carefully; their primary goal as reps is to be out selling the books, and while trade shows are important for the promotion of the agency and its publishers, they are not direct sales venues.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Kate Walker & Company, Ltd., "Request For Proposal."

¹²⁹ Walker-Bootle interview, June 5, 2008.

4. PERSPECTIVES OF OTHER PUBLISHERS' REPRESENTATIVES

While providing a leading example of a commissioned rep agency excelling in the Canadian trade book industry, Kate Walker & Co. is only one model. It has been successful because it has built relationships with publishers and booksellers with the same values as itself. However, there are other types of sales reps in the industry who have carved out similar places for themselves. When asked what agency she considers to be the most similar to Kate Walker & Co., Dot Middlemass suggested Craig Siddall & Associates based on the size of the company and the range of publishers it represents.

I. CRAIG SIDDALL & ASSOCIATES

Jen Fyffe is one of three sales reps for Craig Siddall & Associates (Siddall) in BC. It has an additional sales rep in Alberta, and between the four of them, they offer sales representation in Western Canada, including the Yukon and Northwest Territories. Siddall represents over 50 publishers,¹³⁰ the majority of which come to Siddall via a contract with Canadian Manda Group.¹³¹ Canadian Manda is also a commissioned sales agency, but is

¹³⁰ Jacqueline Gross & Associates (including Charles River Media, CMP Books, Kaplan, Teora Books, Thomson Nelson/Gage), Langenscheidt (including Ullmann), Phaidon, Dorling Kindersley. (Western Book Reps Association, "Spring 2009 Directory.")

¹³¹ Through Canadian Manda Group, Siddall represents: Abrams/Stewart, Andrews McMeel, Assouline, Dateworks, Diamond Book Group, Dover Publications, ECW, F+W and Krause Publications (including Adams Media), Globe Pequot/Footprint/Lyons Press/Waterford Press, Ingram, Ingram Publisher Services, Independent Publishers Group, Jaguar Book Group (Arsenal Pulp Press, Avedition, Braun, Daab, Getty Publications, Guinness, Octopus, Robert Bateman Calendars), Kumon Publishing, Laughing Elephant Stationery, Merrell, Motorbooks Int'l., Pomegranate Publications, Prestel (Scalo, Schirmer Mosel, DGV), Quayside Publishing (including

larger and set up to take on both national and international accounts across Canada. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Canadian Manda has its own sales reps for Eastern Canada, but has contracted Siddall to sell its publishers' titles in Western Canada. The vast majority of Siddall's lists are American or British.

Within BC each rep has specific accounts, not necessarily a territory. This stems out of the history that each rep has with particular accounts. As a small agency, Fyffe reports that the reps try to visit as many accounts as possible, but that they schedule phone appointments with remote customers like the Yellowknife Book Cellar, because "it's just not cost effective" to travel up there to visit them twice a year.¹³²

For Fyffe, her accounts tend to be "specialty accounts;" she has five independent bookstore accounts, and then she must seek out alternative markets for her books. She acknowledges that her primary role is as a "sales person," but that her goal is aiding the retailer in finding the best product for their store.

While other Siddall reps focus on frontlist, Fyffe reports that backlist is very important for her. Like Kate Walker & Co., when Fyffe is preparing to meet a new client, she will research their store as well as her publishers' frontlist and backlist to find titles to suggest. This requires having "an idea of what's going on in the general marketplace everywhere, outside of books." For her, "It's a media-sort of job. So many books are linked to media and television and newspapers, so you really do have to have an awareness of

Creative Publishing, Haynes, Voyageur, Zenith), Sourcebooks, Sterling Publishing, Tabori & Chang, Unemployed Philosophers Guild. (Western Book Reps Association, "Spring 2009 Directory.")

¹³² Jen Fyffe, interview with Leslie Bootle, February 9, 2009.

current affairs in order for you to show the bookseller why this particular product will work in this moment.”¹³³

Siddall’s lists boast a wide variety of books, including several lines of high-end art and lifestyle books, which means that Fyffe is always on the lookout for new places to pitch this assortment. She notes that in addition to current affairs, she is also paying attention to trends: “I’m looking around to see what colours are happening, what lifestyle shows are working and see how I can fit that lifestyle book into a store.”

For her, it is often about pitching particular lists to specific locations, rather than bringing the whole collection of publishers everywhere she goes. For example, Fyffe has several books on knitting, which she sells to the knitting stores. She has had success with interior design stores that are setting up their showrooms to reflect a certain lifestyle, and sells them books to put on showroom bookshelves. Fyffe even reports that one of her accounts sells “beautiful custom-built furniture,” and high-end lifestyle books and cookbooks “walk out of her store;” the store’s customers are “people who want to look at beautiful cookbooks and not necessarily cook, and [this store owner] is taking a chance on them.” In addition to locating retailers who sell products on similar topics to her books, Fyffe is chasing down types of customers by thinking about where they shop, and impressing upon shop owners that they do not have to be a bookstore to sell books.

¹³³ Fyffe-Bootle interview, February 9, 2009.

II. SIMON & SCHUSTER CANADA

While Siddall and Kate Walker & Co. are agencies of sales reps, there are also in-house sales reps in the Canadian trade book industry who work for multinational publishers. Simon & Schuster is a New York-based company that does not publish in Canada, but it does have a Canadian sales and marketing office (Simon & Schuster Canada) based in Markham, Ontario. Kate Saunders, who sells in BC, is one of five field reps. As an exclusive rep for Simon & Schuster Canada (SSC), she represents a total of 48 lines, including all of the Simon imprints¹³⁴ and those presses who are sold, marketed, and distributed in Canada and the USA by Simon & Schuster.¹³⁵

As the rep for a multinational, Saunders' lists of books and priorities for sales are different than those of commissioned rep agencies. SSC, as well as most of the other multinationals, publishes three seasons per year. While this creates a lot more work for reps—visiting all accounts three times per year instead of two, constantly juggling sale conferences for future seasons with selling current seasons, and providing follow-up to customers on previous seasons—Saunders reports that it is the only way to manage the lists

¹³⁴ i.e. Aladdin Paperbacks, Atheneum Books for Young Readers, Atria, Atria Latino Books, Baen, Beyond Words, Cold Spring Press, Downtown Press, Fireside, Free Press, Howard Books, Margaret K. McElderry Books, MTV Books, Little Simon, Little Simon Inspirations, Paraview Press, Pocket Books, Pocket Books UK, Pocket Star Books, Scribner, Scribner Paperback Fiction, Scribner UK, Simon & Schuster [USA], Simon & Schuster Audio, Simon & Schuster Australia, Simon & Schuster for Young Readers, Simon & Schuster UK, Simon Pulse, Simon Scribbles, Simon Spotlight, Simon Spotlight Entertainment, Star Trek, Strebtor Books, Threshold Editions, Touchstone, VH-1 Cooks, Washington Square Press, and World Wrestling Entertainment Books. (Western Book Reps Association, "Spring 2009 Directory.")

¹³⁵ Baseball America, Black Library/Black Flame, Book Republic Press, Cardoza, Cider Mills Press, Open Road Publishing, Peterson's, A Treasure's Trove, VIZ-MANGA, Wall Street Journal Books, and World Almanac. (Western Book Reps Association, "Spring 2009 Directory.")

because they “are so big that if you did not break them down, it would just be overwhelming for everyone.”¹³⁶

SSC’s lists are “heavy on current affairs, especially US current affairs.”¹³⁷ It also has strong lines of “commercial fiction,” which include mysteries, science fiction, thrillers, and mass-market titles. It does not have any regional-interest titles, which affects where the reps will sell the books. Saunders has to prioritize her time and her account visits because of these three seasons and the nature of her lists, so “realistically you only can see your top accounts in person.” She frequently receives add-on titles from head office, which means that not only does she need to visit each of her top accounts more than once per season, but she also needs to organize her time so that she can fit in these visits with additional titles: “The goal is to make sure that you present to top accounts as often as possible, not necessarily every account... It’s just not doable.” Saunders also notes that when presenting, she is competing with other reps who are possibly seeing her accounts before her. Because certain trends or “flavours of the season” emerge across the board for all publishers, Saunders is competing to present her titles on a specific topic first to prevent bookstores from ordering their fill of that topic before hearing SSC’s titles.

Saunders regularly attends the BC Book Fairs, which are an excellent opportunity for her to see accounts that she might otherwise not be able to travel to. She began to offer group buying sessions at the Book Fair about four years ago. Saunders presents key titles to about ten different accounts at once. They tend to be smaller accounts for SSC, so she

¹³⁶ Kate Saunders, interview with Leslie Bootle, February 20, 2009.

¹³⁷ Saunders-Bootle interview, Feb. 20.

tailors her presentations around what she knows they will buy. For example, Saunders knows that these accounts do not often take chances with hard-covers, so she focuses on trade paperback. Saunders is aware that without the book fairs, she would not see many of these accounts because her company “can’t justify traveling and spending money to stay overnight to get a very small order.” She acknowledges that “it may sound harsh, but you have to be doing enough business dollar-wise to have face-to-face time.”

Saunders’ accounts include key independent bookstores in BC, some Western Canadian wholesalers, and Overwaitea Foods. At one point, SSC had four reps in BC and traveled more to all accounts, but in an effort to allocate resources to the accounts that produce the highest sales, they now have only Saunders. However, Saunders feels secure in her territory because “BC has always been one of the stronger independent markets, and we have so many key accounts here that are leaders in the independent world.”

In the Ontario head office, SSC employs seven sales representatives selling to national accounts. Like other multinationals, SSC has the ability to invest more significantly in promotional campaigns with chains like Indigo/Chapters than small Canadian presses, which is one of the ways that they have developed a strong presence in the chains. For SSC, the estimate is that 80% of its business is brought in by 20% of its accounts, so the message from head office is to continue to focus on accounts that produce orders.

As such, Saunders does not seek out new accounts at all, which is quite a different business model from Kate Walker & Co. SSC does not have gift lines, and any accounts that might be considered gift-type accounts are handled by a special sales manager in the Ontario

office. Regional accounts like the BC Museum do not figure highly into Saunders' account list because SSC does not specialize in regional books.

Another significant difference about working for multinationals has been their approach to incorporating technology into the workplace. For approximately five years now, Saunders has been attending sales conferences from her home office via web conferencing software. She views editors' Power Point presentations on her screen while watching a live feed of them speaking. Previously, the three sales conferences per year would each necessitate approximately eight days of travel and conference attendance out of its reps, which means SSC is able to save considerable expense and time by conferencing online. SSC has since initiated an annual off-site meeting to enable field reps to meet face-to-face, and uses that opportunity to offer themed training that is business-focused, something that was never included at sales conferences due to lack of time.¹³⁸

While Kate Walker & Co.'s first glimpse of the next season's list happens at sales conference, SSC distributes teaser chapters and manuscripts to its sales reps before sales conference so that they've had a chance to become familiar with the lists. This used to be done by mailing boxes of photocopied pages across the country, but now SSC has provided each rep with a Sony Reader and access to a company intranet site where advance reading material is posted. Another advantage of working for a multinational is that Saunders has access to sales data and history for all of the lists she represents, and she will pull specialized reports before meeting with individual accounts. This is a valuable sales asset, and one that

¹³⁸ Saunders-Bootle interview, Feb. 20.

many commissioned rep agencies do not always have access to, being that they are a separate company.

5. CONCLUSIONS

An independent Canadian publisher recently shared his opinion that this analysis might be an epitaph to a part of the industry that is changing to improve efficiency.¹³⁹ He pointed out that technology like Booknet Canada (BNC) Prospector will negatively affect the future of publishers' representatives.

BNC Prospector is a recent initiative undertaken by BNC, a non-profit group sponsored by the Department of Canadian Heritage to improve "technology innovation for Canadian publishers, distributors and booksellers great and small."¹⁴⁰ BNC offers a variety of program including BNC Sales Data, a program to consolidate sales data provided by all types and sizes of booksellers to provide supply chain information and reporting to publishers and other suppliers. Additionally, it provides retailers with a "market-wide view of book sales."¹⁴¹ However, the general impressions of BNC that reps hear from their customers are that it is "an incomplete picture," because while the chains are reporting their data, the independent bookstores remain wary.¹⁴²

This lack of participation became part of the impetus for Prospector:

BNC Prospector is a BNC SalesData module designed specifically for independent retailers to analyze what books are selling and searches for titles that might be missing. BNC Prospector enables stores to share data with each other and compare themselves to the whole market. This free service helps independent bookstores

¹³⁹ Interview with an anonymous publisher, January 29, 2009.

¹⁴⁰ BookNet Canada, "About BookNet Canada," http://www.booknetcanada.ca/mambo/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=59&Itemid=132.

¹⁴¹ BookNet Canada, "BookNet Canada Basics For Publishers," http://www.booknetcanada.ca/mambo/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=118&Itemid=134#SalesData.

¹⁴² Ali Hewitt, interview with Leslie Bootle, February 8, 2009.

monitor stock turn, improve category development and management, optimize current sections and finetune existing stock.¹⁴³

Prospector does not only provide sales data, but claims to help booksellers use their purchasing time more efficiently. From its website,

[Prospector is BNC's] response to the time and resource crunch facing independent retailers. This is a tool that analyzes what you're selling and searches for titles that you're missing. You know what kind of titles work in your store and BNC Prospector gives you the quick and easy way to find all of them.¹⁴⁴

BNC Prospector could be a useful tool for the future, although it does not appear that many people in the industry use it right now: only one of the seven people asked about Prospector for the purposes of this report knew what the program was.¹⁴⁵ There are some limitations to its functionality for all bookstores. The title suggestions that BNC Prospector makes for a unique independent bookstore are based on bibliographic data input from a variety of, but not all, Canadian publishers. They depend on how publishers have chosen to categorize books, which is not always the way that a bookstore organizes its shelves, and the suggestions would have to be taken with only sales figures and catalogue copy to back them up.

However, Prospector is a relatively new program; with growing participation and feedback from retailers, it will continue to improve in effectiveness. Retailers have shown that they are open to using technology in the ordering process, as many independent

¹⁴³ BookNet Canada, "BookNet Canada Basics For Booksellers," http://www.booknetcanada.ca/mambo/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=119&Itemid=135.

¹⁴⁴ BookNet Canada, "BNC Prospector," http://www.booknetcanada.ca/mambo/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=112&Itemid=130.

¹⁴⁵ Responding that she was aware of the program was Ria Bleumer of Duthie Books, Bleumer-Bootle email, February 16, 2009.

bookstores across the country currently use BookManager, a Canadian program developed by Mosaic Books' owner Michael Neill. Both Kate Walker & Co. reps and Kate Saunders of SSC report that their independent bookstore customers rely on BookManager to be able to see national sales data, while the chain stores have their own systems in place for tracking sales.

When working with bookstores, reps put significant energy into cultivating an understanding of the bookstore's goals and target market so that they can help the bookseller stock books that he or she will have success selling. Having a sales rep come in and present a customized selection of titles that he or she believes will work well in the given bookstore, offer information that the bookseller cannot get in a catalogue including promotional plans that may impact the bookstore, and possibly show him or her a sample of what the book will look like, is ultimately a very efficient use of a bookseller's purchasing time.

From the point of view of an independent Canadian publisher, hiring someone to present its list in person with additional information and samples remains a smart investment. While Prospector might be used more frequently by independent bookstores in the future, it will provide an information base from which reps and stores will work to add the human factor. Additionally, as seen in this analysis, independent bookstores are only one of the types of customers that reps work with, and publishers ultimately want their books in as many retail outlets as possible.

Publishers are aware of the specialized service and knowledge that reps provide. Vici Johnstone of Harbour Publishing asserts that Kate Walker & Co. reps "know our list so

well that they're able to glean from our sales meetings where this book is going to fit. I would be surprised if you could really replace that effectively...then it just becomes a numbers game."¹⁴⁶ Publishers, for whom customer account visits are not cost effective, rely on reps to field concerns from bookstores and provide a line of contact to the publisher when customer service issues arise. With so many titles out there vying for shelf space, it is all too easy for a retailer to get turned off a publisher because of a service concern. Rather than lose a customer, the publisher relies on their rep to help resolve issues and keep communication—and orders—flowing.

For many segments of the trade book industry, sales reps facilitate the relationship between the creators and marketers of the books, and the people that want to sell them to the end user. Books are not like any other product, and publishing is a cultural industry. As Ria Bleumer from Duthie Books puts it, “sales reps are an important connection, a personal one, and can have a large influence on the bookseller, but also on the publisher...They are the ones in the field [who] know what sells where. Head office in Toronto does not always.”¹⁴⁷ Bleumer says that while she supports technological improvements like ordering online to help save paper and increase efficiency, she does not like “the idea of impersonal trading” because “we still need reps to take care of our accounts one way or another.”

All of the reps interviewed for this paper stressed that the relationships they have made within this industry are the reason that they have had success in their role as reps, and that they continue to enjoy working in the industry. Kate Walker & Co. rep Morgen Young

¹⁴⁶ Johnstone-Bootle interview, February 8, 2009.

¹⁴⁷ Bleumer-Bootle email, February 16, 2009.

asserts that “personal relationships mean more in publishing than in any other industry.”¹⁴⁸

The relationships that Kate Walker & Co. has built with booksellers and retailers across the country make their sales agency an asset to the publishers they represent, many of whom benefit from a long-standing relationship with Kate Walker & Co. themselves.

¹⁴⁸ Young-Bootle interview, January 29, 2009.

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