**From Dissertation to Book - Peter der Manuelian**

SPEAKER 1: Thank you also to the organizers. This is a privilege to be with such a great group, and I'd like to learn from you as well as sharing some of my own thoughts. I think this side of the table represents the cream of the crop. These people are the best of the best.

And so if you're able to get a manuscript accepted with either of these presses, you are in terrific hands. They will tailor and craft it, the length, the illustrations, all of that. Having an editor to try to really tighten up some of the prose is just a fantastic thing.

I'm going to maybe take the opposite approach a little bit and talk about life for the rest of us when we're not quite so fortunate or we're in a very narrow field or we're aiming at a very specific audience. And that's been my own personal experience. I'm an Egyptologist, and that's not for everybody. So that's pharaonic history and hieroglyphs and pyramids and mummies and things like that.

In trade publications, of course, you've seen them. There are plenty of coffee table books about everything you can imagine-- Cleopatra and how the pyramids were built and all of these sorts of things. But for scholars coming up, there are much more narrow and focused dissertations. And in my own experience, I've become a sort of a hybrid mutant in the publishing world. And at the risk of seeming like the enemy to my esteemed colleagues here, I'll tell you a bit more about my experience.

One of the things that fascinates me about ancient Egypt is its iconic nature, its graphical nature, so the pictorial aspect of the language and things like that. So I've been involved from the beginning with epigraphy and drawings and reproductions. And pictures play almost as large a part in my publications as the words do.

So I realized early on-- I think back in the '80s when the first Macintoshes were coming out-- I instantly saw this wonderful connection between the ancient Egyptian way of thinking and this now user interface graphically-oriented way of computing. And so I saw the Macintosh as this way for someone like me, a non-programmer, to get into the design and the layout and the word processing side of things.

And so I spent a tremendous amount of time realizing no one was going to pay for my books and to have them beautifully designed and edited and all that, that I needed to take on some of those roles myself. And I did. So my original thesis, which was actually an undergraduate thesis here and which was published several years later in a monograph series in Germany, I can safely say I designed it myself. And it's probably the world's ugliest academic publication ever produced, with an amazing array of fonts and dot matrix hieroglyphs. And I'm too embarrassed to bring it today.

But it's a learning process. And by force, really, and the fact that I'm a control freak, I try to pick up as many of the pieces of this puzzle as I could. So from altering traditional Times Roman fonts into transliteration fonts, you know, H's with dots under them and T's and D's with lines under them so that you could transliterate hieroglyphs and inscriptions and things and then working with computer hieroglyphic fonts and typefaces. And now, of course, they're a dime a dozen, and it doesn't matter if you're on a Mac or a PC, all of these tools are there.

And from there, it's learning what dots per inch means and Photoshop files and what is publishable quality and what is just for use on the web or the screen. Same with line art and drawings, there's a-- what was the word they used? Complications, I think, illustrations. They certainly do represent complications, but by dabbling into each of these fields and then moving from Word to FrameMaker to QuarkXPress, and now to Adobe InDesign, I've been able to take on enough of these skills, I think, where I can lay out the books the way I see fit.

And so that is for those cases where you're not lucky enough to have Harvard Press behind you and wonderful professional designers there, the more of those pieces of the puzzle you can control, even if you're not doing it yourself, but at least understand some of the jargon, I think that really helps get a leg up if you're talking about a limited monograph series in academic press, places where you're going to have to come out with the publication subsidy yourself. They will take your book on if you can fork over the $40,000 or the $70,000 from somewhere to get it published, that certainly helps.

And that means you have to know what you're dealing with. How can you figure out what that Microsoft Word document shrinks down to in a typeset laid out document? How many pages would it really be? How many illustrations do you need, and are they full page? Do they really need to be that big? Or can they be half page or quarter page?

Do you need color? And, if so, does it have to be peppered through the text? That's a lot more expensive, because it means all your signatures have to go on a four-color or a six-color press. Or can they be bunched at the end of the book? So most of the book is much cheaper to produce, because it's just black ink and then just a section of color plates, for example.

Does it need to be hardcover or does it need to be paperback? Does it need a dust jacket? These are all the types of formal specs that any printer is going to want to know if they're going to move ahead with your project. So estimating those types of things and having a handle on that is good.

I brought a couple of examples, and I'll show you just one simple benefit of this kind of control. I did a book on a bunch of Egyptian tombstones which are rectangular, and so because I was controlling the process, I get to make the book like this instead of vertical.

And that's the kind of thing that maybe working with an editor, you may not have that kind of freedom. They're used to doing vertical books for all kinds of reasons. And there are good reasons. This one doesn't fit on a bookshelf very well. It sticks out quite a bit. But that's one of the advantages of controlling these aspects of the design process.

So over the years, I got more involved in this and produced my own publications this way, working with printers, of course, obviously, and going on press myself. And then expanded a little bit and started producing Egyptological publications for the Metropolitan Museum, for Penn, for Yale, Brown University, for other places. And that actually brought in a decent amount of income, even though these are not trade publications they're not bestsellers, but it was an interesting sort of side source of income for me, which was not insubstantial.

The books themselves don't make money. These are probably money losers, but I'd suggest at this stage in your career you're not really out to make millions with a trade publication. You're getting your new scholarship, your new research out there.

So in a case like this, there are 500 copies of this book. It costs a lot to produce, sells for about $150. That's probably beyond your normal price point, right? By contrast, when I needed a break from my dissertation, I did a children's book, which was just the hieroglyphic alphabet book. And that was picked up by Scholastic Press and reprinted as a paperback for $5.95, and that sold about 200,000 copies across the country.

So it's quite a change between these different areas of focus. And I think you hit on the right term with diversity, who you're aiming at, what your audience is. Are you trying to show your new research? Focus on the colleagues in your maybe small field, or are you trying to do a trade publication or go with one of the big presses? Those are all key.

So the advantages for me were feeling in control of the process, being able to produce the graphics I needed, do the layouts I want, choose the format of the book and that sort of thing, work with different printers. The disadvantage, I would say, is that all of that has come out of my own research time. So the number of books I have written and produced personally would, I feel, be much larger if, of course, I hadn't been spending a lot of that time producing books for colleagues.

So in a sense, it was enriching because I got to know my colleagues, I got to read their works, which are in my field and, of course, I was very interested in them as well. But, again, all of that technology time comes out of my academic time and my research time.

So I'd say be aware of those issues. What are you writing? What formats does it have? What kinds of additional challenges are you facing? And then you'll be better equipped to choose the publishers that are interested, see what kind of subsidies may or may not be necessary, and to try to take the process from there and then be more in control of what's happening.

That's not for everyone. And, as I said, this is a very strange and quirky sort of career path that I've taken, where the design aspect is so much of it. But even if you're going to hand that manuscript off to someone else, it's good to know what a designer is then going to be doing.

And as a final caution, I'd say keep track of the entire process. And going forward, there is the challenge that books like this could be a bit of a dinosaur. And I don't know how much longer museums and universities will be wanting to see these small print run publications going.

And so think about the conversion of your book to other types of reading. Would you rather lug this around? Here. Here's the thickness comparison. Would you rather lug this around or that around?

And so often I see colleagues work so hard on a book, send it off, it goes perhaps to a designer and then to the press. And then they totally lose interest in the final digital files. And they're on some designer's computer in another state, and no one knows where they are. And was that really the final version when we corrected that plate or that drawing?

And I think that's just shameful. If you can hang onto the final book files, if you designed them, or know where the designer is and try to get hold of those, there will be an electronic version down the road or a web version or ways to reach a larger audience that your perhaps small print run book couldn't do. So do try to keep track of that. I think you'll find more and more that will be the way to go as these kinds of portable devices pick up steam and get ever more popular.

That is my contribution. I'm hoping that's not too at odds at what the professional presses have to contribute. But I'd welcome your feedback and questions for any of the panel. Thanks.

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