**Writing Books for Readers Beyond Academe - Introduction**

JUDY SINGER: Good afternoon everyone, I'm Judy Singer, I'm the Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity, and I want to thank you all for joining us this afternoon for this panel on academics writing books for audiences that are beyond academia. We have been running, from the Senior Vice Provost's Office, a number of book events over the last few years, all designed to bring Harvard faculty together to talk about the publication process, to try to facilitate your publishing, getting contacts with editors, and getting an inside behind-the-scenes look. This particular event has proved so popular we actually had to turn people away, and so we're videoing it, so it will be up on the web to be available to other people.

The purpose of this particular event is to stretch ourselves a little bit, and to think not just about the audiences we typically write for in terms of our professional colleagues, but also the wider world. Part of being a Harvard faculty member is having an impact on your field. But part of being a Harvard faculty member is to have an impact beyond your field.

The context for this work though is a little bit tricky, and I'm going to quote from this week's Chronicle of Higher Ed, that had a story on Charles Murray and his new book. And I'm going to read through the opening paragraph and the closing paragraph to this piece. It's an interesting piece, you can read the whole thing. But I think it sets the context for today very well.

"Publishers, forget about carefully reasoned, nuanced discussions of the issues of the day. That stuff is for college professors or yuppies yammering away in their salons. If you print politically oriented books and you want to make the big bucks, you need to think like a boxing promoter and stage fights that will get attention. And nothing, but nothing draws hype like a match up between liberal pundits and the man they love to hate, the belligerent behind the bell curve, the warrior against welfare, the proudly political, incorrect Charles Murray."

And it goes on to talk about his most recent book, which I will not go into, and the arguments for and con. But at the end of the article, it's summarized by saying, "At the end of the day, the cultural and economic divide most illuminated by Coming Apart--" that's Murray's new book, "might be one found in scholarly publishing. On one side are authors and publishers who produce nuanced books that offer only conclusion stemming from research and tend to be too esoteric for wide readership. On the other side are authors and publishers who cash in by producing best selling polemics in which research is used to buttress foregone conclusions."

So I think the challenge for everybody here is how to figure out how to walk between Scylla and Charybdis and come up with something that you can feel good about, but, that also satisfies the broader goals.

I'm going to yield the podium to my colleague, Amy Brand, Assistant Provost for Faculty Appointments who helped organize this particular panel, in fact all our book publishing panels, and the one thing you need to know about Amy is she was an editor at MIT Press for many, many years, and so has a lot of experience with the book publishing world so, Amy.

AMY BRAND: As Judy mentioned, we've been doing a whole series of events on book publishing I count seven or eight in the last two years. And the reason that we decided to focus on trade books is that in all of these events questions about how to write for a broader audience keep coming up. So surely questions about working with agents and editors, and we'll address those, but also questions about defining the crucial difference in the writing style that's required to reach a broader audience. In other words, how to unlearn how to write like an academic.

So the great panel that we have for you today is here, not just to expound, they're also here to answer your questions and engage in discussion, and I trust you'll do your part when the time comes.

We'll start with Angela von der Lippe, Vice President and Senior Editor at Norton. Angela's also a novelist, and among her many other qualifications for kicking off this panel, Angela was an editor at Harvard University Press for many years, and has also worked with many Harvard faculty as authors.

We'll then turn to Betsy Lerner who's a literary agent in New York. Betsy's author of the book on writing that you now all have, if you picked it up at the registration table, The Forest for the Trees. Betsy also has a blog on publishing, which in her own words in part, "strives to address complex issues involving writers personalities, especially, but not limited to their self-destructive proclivities. But mostly, it's a place to regularly vent about publishing."

And then we'll turn to our two eminent faculty members and writers from the faculty of Arts and Sciences, Dan Gilbert Professor of Psychology and author of the New York Times best seller, Stumbling On Happiness, and Luke Menand, Robert M Bass, Professor of English, a regular contributor to the New Yorker and author most recently of The Marketplace of Ideas.