

CWIG conference

Saturday 15 September 2012

(Notes by Rhiannon Lassiter for Mary M Hoffman)

Welcome (Nicola Solomon and Helena Pielichaty)

The role of the society: networking, advice, campaigning.

John Dougherty has done a video "what's wrong with Ed Vaizey"

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQZsrINGmbg&feature=youtube_gdata_player

Jane Ray and Ros Asquith, chaired by Nicola Smee

Jane Ray:

First book "Mr and Mrs Teddy got for a picnic" made at age 5, discovered that folding up pieces of paper made a book. created about 30 of these: the teddies going to the moon, to meet the queen etc.

Later on into Mice. 12 days of Christmas with mice.

At 17 a story about mr rat who abandons the rat race and goes to live in the garden shed.

Went to art school: did glassblowing and furniture design, Hated it.

Went to Orchard, met Judith, illustrated a poetry collection. Then A balloon for Mr Grey.

use of borders, inspired by folk art

The story of Christmas

Houses all have similar shape inspired by the house she was born in

Sketchbooks are very important, shes used them all her live, copy out poems and songs, draw in them,

Picture from "can you catch a mermaid" based on picture of her two daughters.

Another sketch based on her middle daughter who used to wear a tutu and wellingtons.

sketch for moonbird, a fantasy story about a prince who was deaf. Inspired by a teacher who said all books for deaf children very literal but children need fantasy.

Playing about with animals and plants in sketchbook that might exist on the moon.

Final work shows more polished version, delight of the sketchbook is ability to play.

Favourite book is whatever I'm writing at the moment but "Fairytale" for walker has a special place in my heart because I feel I improved in my work.

Feelings of stories come from first memories associated with that story, with Fairytale.

Symbolic and personal images, a lot of the imagery is about dreams.

Silhouettes

asked to use in the book, first use of these, printed in a soft pinky grey

Started using a completely new technique to her (scraper board) very old technique

Images actually v small and uses a magnifying glass for these.

Eyesight suffering but lovely to find a new technique,

Dollhouse fairy book uses a lot of collage, used patterned papers to build up feeling of dollhouse, to have a homemade feel.

Doll image for book about the declaration of human rights for Frances Lincoln. got "torture" as the brief.

12 days of Christmas for orchard, return to cows (but not mice) of childhood,

most recent work is illustration of Greek myths, Atalanta and the three golden apples. Pandora and her jar of evils (borders creeping in at top and bottom) Pegasus. Mythological animals a real joy.

Ros Asquith:

As you can see I can't really draw.

I wanted to be heretical because after last night I wanted to say I'm not entirely convinced about the value of racing, I have heard two passionate convinced speeches. one by Kevin Corssly Holland last night and one by Jamie Oliver, neither man had read as a child.

As a child I knew that Alice quote "what is the use of a book without pictures and conversations" last night tEd Dewan suggested that the tenniel illustrations were what made the book and Charles Dodgeson pulled along.

In Britain people are very puritanical about illustration, that illustrated books are for children. Not so in France where adults read graphic novels quite seriously.

We value words above pictures and tragedy above comedy.

First book the Life of Archibald Spinler about a spider

Then a book about a mammoth

Book about horses at age 12 including horsoscopes and stallion of the month. Parody of advice columns.

First job at 17 paid to illustrate Greek myths for audio visual aid company. Almost into technology before books.

Lithographs and etchings, love the smell of mentholated spirits.

Thought I was going to be like Jane Ray and be a more serious kind of arts but that's not how it ended up.

First book self published using prontaprint used a lot of puns.

Murals while under apprenticeship across Europe, taught from old book which warned not to take too much of the grape and always do your best even if no one can see it that's work for the angels. Best work often at the top of the church where it hasn't yet faded.

Then I had babies. No one tells you how funny babies are.

Book for small feminist press later bought by Robert Maxwell who ended up suing her, Publishing company brought in a Silk to defend her and they won.

Doris cartoon for the weekend Guardian, cleaned for the chattering classes, never spoke herself, to me symbolised the worker ground under

Got a letter from a prisoner who said he loved Doris and his mother was a cleaner and he sat in the corner while she cleaned little Tarquin's nursery. He said I couldn't wait until I grew up and robbed the lot of them!

Lots of cartoons about feminism, always a feminist and not ashamed to be one.

First proper book "I was a teenage worrier"

Asked people to vote for first cover or second one. Liked the individualism of the first.

My first book was my most successful book

Roughs the key to artwork. You do so many versions, you don't know which is best, you need another opinion.

more funny artwork, got more friends when you tell jokes, could talk forever about equal pay

Astonished about Michael Gove, various cartoons on subject of school

My children are always baffled

The great big book of families, back to Tolstoy, wonderful book with Mary Hoffman

Attacked by Christian fundamentalists on amazon.

it's not Fair(y) book, fairy comes and eats you when you moan

the alien schoolboy, recent series, looking at earth from alien POV.

Writers Websites

Katherine Woodfine, Sarah Benton, Julia Eccleshare, Celia Rees, John Dougherty,

How much do you need a website:

SB: I think it's really important but you need to think about what to do online and if your writing schedule is really busy perhaps keep that to just a presence online

KW: when I discover a new author one of the very first things I do is put their information into google. So if you don't have a web presence you're missing an opportunity.

What about if you're writing books for preschoolers

KW: lots of teachers and parents use the web

JE: the link to google is so instinctive for people that you do need to have a click.

CR: for those of us who write for teenagers and children this is one of the place they look for, lots of platforms, Facebook and twitter. Anyone can set this up, websites a bit more problematic, but SOA can help you.

People come together and share knowledge and experience and for me that's how joint blogging works. It's tough to keep a personal blog up, it takes a toll and takes time out of writing but contributing to a joint blog seems to me the way to go forward and to come together. Building and increasing connections at a time when sometimes it seems the number of titles are shrinking. one of the most exciting things about being a kid is discovering new writers.

JD: I am one of the editorial team on ABBA, and you only have to blog once or twice a month and there's something new on the site every day,

What should publishers be doing to help an author get a presence on the web

SB: You should not feel embarrassed to ask your publisher for help. The sales and editorial team should be asking you from the start what you're comfortable with and show you how to set up a Facebook page.

Tools like Wordpress will help you to set up a site for £30.

JE: It seems that publishers could do a great deal more to use websites to promote all their authors. Modelled the Guardian kids book website on Spinebreakers and all publishers who don't do it are missing a trick. You get to find out what your readers are thinking. It's a transactional experience rather than something you do on your own delivering product.

SB: You should be making sure if you have a website of your own that your publisher is driving traffic towards your site.

CR: so go home, email your publisher and demand that they promote your website. They have these dinosaur models of websites for one person or a rolling thing about new books and don't use the breadth of talent they have on their lists and wonder why those books aren't selling. But if you have a big selling author for example in fantasy you have 6 others you could be selling.

SB: when we were building our publishing website I thought we shouldn't have big promotions for the most popular author. We have a section for if you like this book here are other books you might like.

JE: I've always had a lot of information from publicists about what they'd like to see in the paper. But people don't understand how little space there is in newspapers for anything other than news. Publicists need to think much more intelligently about where to put their content. there's no room for a big feature on an author on the Guardian so where to put it - on the web. You need to help your publisher think about this, Don't think about print anymore. Don't think that being in print is more important and don't let them think that.

JD: Celia and I are both on cooperative blogs. I am a member of ABBA and when we started up we weren't really sure who we were writing for. Started writing for adults. Most of the people who read are blog are either in the publishing industry or want to be. One of the things I love about it is the range of different voices, Something very serious followed by something v silly indeed. Don't have to work on setting it up and maintaining it. Celia do you want to say something about the History Girls?

CR: I am just a humble contributor to the History Girls which was set up by Mary Hoffman and Michelle Loveric and Kath Langrish. Has been very successful. Mary invited thirty people, one person for every day of the month, you have your own day. I'm the 18th of the month. So you know when it's your time to post, It's important to get the administrative details right if you're going to set up a joint blog.

I think one of the great things about a joint blog is that you're working with other people and it makes you feel better, It makes you feel you're doing something. Instead of sitting at home waiting for emails or your book comes out and nothing happens. People on blogs are very generous in writing about other peoples book. Do authors dream of electric books was set up by two authors who were tired of seeing their books go out of print. We a doing it for ourselves and we don't feel so powerless.

JD: ABBA online festival last year had blog posts every half an hour over a whole weekend. You can be really inventive with a joint blog.

Anne Cassidy: Part of the reason for doing a joint blog was the reason you said. but also with a joint blog the 30 people would each have their own contacts, multiplying the number of people visiting the blog and getting more people to read everyone's blog.

JD: And Celia isn't the history girls just for authors of history fiction

CR: and it's all girls although we do have the occasional guest.

Q: How many page views?

A: History Girls gets about 400 a day.

ABBA gets 15,000 a month

JD: We did find with the online festival that the page views went up and stayed up afterwards.

JD: Do you belong to a joint blog.

Jo: Girls Heart Books, like the history girls we have 30 bloggers and also guest bloggers. At least 8 blog posts a week. Lots of giveaways. Getting comments from girls in the age group we are targeting who are reading and coming back to the blog. One of the reasons for the blog was to 'poach' readers or rather share them out. Had a lot of big names coming over to the blog and bringing readers with them. Have about 400 readers a day, trying to boost that by targeting schools.

Fiona: as a contributor. What's great about the format is that it looks like a magazine. Not just one big block of text. Different from history girls in that you never know what writer you're going to get on any individual day. nicely random.

Q: do you know about illustration Friday, which is a joint blog. Once a week put up a word and people illustrate it.

Dennis: Authors Electric, about 29 authors. very eclectic so you never know what you're going to get it. All quite old and being quietly dropped from publishers. All decimated to putting out of print books on kindle.

Get 9-10,000 page views a month, we're up to 23,000 for a while. Was able to give away a lot of books.

An authors group called The Edge, blog is one of the things we do

Huffington post blogger says they let you link to two books.

Susie Day: UKYA.co.uk not a group blog but a catalogue of books for 14 year olds from Britain. Add stuff all the time.

Peony Lewis: Picture Book Den, about 10 people. Blog every five days. Looking for illustrators as guest bloggers. Blogs that get the most views tend to be how tos.

JD: any questions

Jo: do you think that publishers at the moment have a big enough digital department. It seems to take up to three months for the publishers to put that up on their website, I get the feeling that they're stretched thin. are there enough people in the publishers doing those jobs.

SB: I think that is quite true and publishers have specific digital people and they should be a step change in that everyone knows how to use a website and how to tweet. It shouldn't be the case that because so and so is on holiday they can't update your website for two weeks, Everyone in marketing and PR should have that expertise.

Q: How do you successfully integrate blogging and tweeting into the working week?

CR: I still haven't managed to organise my time. I've tried everything, the timer and only tweet for 15 minutes. It has to be a discipline that you only go onto a social networking site. All of the things that happen are because you're a writer and you write books not because you're a blogger and you have to keep that in focus.

KW: don't spread yourself too thin, short regular updates are better than long blog posts.

One of our bloggers posts a you tube video.mDoesnt have to be a massive time suck.

Kath Langrish: I'd like to add to that. Can be difficult to keep up with all the blogs you're in. Writing a short piece for a blog can be v satisfying, instant feedback. Also possible to write a bunch of blogs at once. Pointless to write a blog if you're not prepared to advertise and talk about it.

JD: we've talked about the web being more egalitarian, how can we get our blog on the guardian or book trust website,

KW: most of the approaches that I get are from publicists, We do have lots of different slots, writing tips, guest posts . The great thing about the web is that we have lots of capacity to give space to up and coming writers we have the flexibility to do that.

JD: Do you take direct approaches as well

KW: not very often

JE: on our review pages any child can write a review of any book. No one running the reviews cares if it's a new book or not or a famous author or not. WE also do podcasts and top tens. the guardian doesn't have a huge sense of hierarchy. The publicity departments need to have much more sense of the story they are telling. Eg I've written a post that happened to come to me about geeks but that could have been pitched to the guardian. it doesn't help a lot for individual authors to contact us, there needs to be some kind of mediation, so this should come via your publicist. the site is quick and flexible and if I was an author I'd be getting on to my publishers about this, The guardian reviews only 40 books a year.

CR: The policy of publishers and publicity departments is to focus on the latest book so won't pitch because that author doesn't have anew book coming out. We could put more pressure on them.

Q: how authors should present themselves on the internet. I watched the Olympics with a glass of wine in my hand. could, easily have said something silly. Do you think media training is necessary when approaching social media.

KW: Be yourself. you do have to be a bit careful and bearing in mind your audience. Look at Derek Landry, when he started blogging he wrote about not wantit to do it and that was really funny.

CR: one of the problems that we have is that we feel we have to have multiple personalities and be different people.find blogging a strain because you have to nuance the writing. One of the reasons why were writers is because we don't want everyone knowing everything about us. Cn be exhausting to project lots of personas. IMprtant to decide who you are as an author and what your persona is as an author and won't be the same as your persona as a private person.

KW: should definitely decide what the line is. Find what you're comfortable with sharing.

What should I put in my book

Lauren Buckland, Catherine Johnson

Q: is dystopia dead?

CJ: I'm not qualified to speak on dystopia, Hunger games did v well but don't think anything was as big as it

JB: Paranormal was so huge in the wake of twilight but after the hunger Games the hasn't been anything coming out at the same level.

CJ: should writers always be aiming for what's just come out

LB; No, it's extremely difficult to write to a genre, when it hits it hits, burns brightly for a short time and by the time your book comes out its over.

Q: Julia Eccleshare said its pretty impossible to predict what's next, I heard an agent tell an audience that they should try to second guess the next big thing.

CJ: the problem is that we're always hoping that whatever we write will do well and usually they don't. We hope that the publisher will take up our books and it will do well but we all know you could write the best book inthe world and it does nothing. we have to write what we love. If we knew what would pay off our mortgage we would do it. We all love writing books and we all hope someone will see what's in it. jacquleine Wlison said one write what you want with one eye on the market,

LB: of you're writing to a genre that you don't feel passionately about there's no authenticity to the writing.

Q: which brings us neatly to the question what do I put in my book

CJ: whatever you feel passionately about, The story you tell and the you-ness of you.

How do you get a big marketing spend.

Lb: marketing spend tends to come with a large advance although there are other ways of getting it out there,

What you put in your book has to be something you are passionate about. You will eat sleep breathe it.

CJ: Lauren is my editor. But the only person who loses if you don't write that book is us. If you've been writing books for any amount of time you know you need to have skin like a rhino. ts like putting your children out in the world and everyone hates them

Jo: but then you're thinking of writing a new book you do need a sounding board. I might not feel passionately about it until you know someone wants it.

CJ you have to think about what do I want to bloody write. Part of being professional is being able to fall in love with an idea.

Q: I agree you shouldn't write to genre becaus they come in and out with the tide. But if you look beneath the surface of those rising and falling genres there are three things which are consistent

Stories about people in complicated relationships

Stories with suspense

Stories inside people's head

Hunger Games is a story about a girl choosing two boys.

KB: twilight is a romance

RL: this is why I think it's so important that writers read, not to follow the genre slavishly but to know what's already been overplayed, I belong to a writers group and 2 years ago someone wanted to write a book about a girl and a game and I said don't do that the Hunger Games is going to be really big and no one will take your book

Q: What interests me is story. People don't buy books because theyre good stories eg Rainbow Magic

A: I wrote rainbow magic and they are all good stories, and because the stories are great it created a great brand, at Orion were looking for a great story which will create great brand

JE: we're confusing a lot of things here, If we follow the line people have to write a particular book we would never have had the curious incident of the dog in the nighttime or a monster calls. these books change the landscape for a while.

The best advice I ever had is that you can't publish a book that you don't really love. What excites me is an original story. Read a wonderful book recently called The Grim Legacy and it's a ridiculously original idea. I don't want to read the same books over and over again but if I'm Robert mucho more you're happy Cherub is doing so well.

LB: as an editor I want passion in what I publish but you have to make a living as well.

Q: I know you do script writing as well Catherine. Publishers are limited in what they can choose, having done script writing myself its a different model. You pitch your idea and are commissioned by radio 4 or whoever to do something in a way that doesn't happen in the publishing world.

CJ: Ive always used writing books to write exactly what I want and used the script writing to put the dinner on the table.

Steve: it strikes me that there's a lot of the language of romance going on, love and passion, and the most a lot of us can hope for is an arranged marriage. Steve and I produce pitches samples of material. that's different from a full MS that a publisher can fall in love with because it's there.

Q: I have six or seven things I'm working in so when you find an editor you can find that right match. one editor I showed something to some years ago said it wasn't the right time for that but showed it again recently and she thinks it could now work. The moe you can see editors and talk to them and show those them those bits the better,

Q: that depends on having editors saying that they're not looking for something at the moment. What criteria does a commissioning editor use for this.

KB: we look at our list and what's already on there. if we have three series already for young readers then we don't have room for another,

Q: how many of you have had a serious conversation with your editor about strategy? Is there a relationship that could be built.

KB: we are very market responsive and if an author says will this kind of book be still popular in three years time I can't answer that but I do spend a lot of time speaking to authors talking about the market.

Kath Langrish:

My agent Catherine Clarke, said a good creative writer would be someone who responsible creatively to criticism.

3 years ago taking to my then editor at Harper Collins and said I wanted to write a historical fantasy and the editor said not the market, why not in the resent, and I went away and thought about that and now I'm writing something set in the future.

also... You go into waterstones now and all the covers are black. So if you don't happen to like vampires or dystopias there might not be anything for you,
KB: when you take a book out you are asked where do you think this could go in retail. the waterstones situation is a bit depressing for publishers and independents are our saviour. You also have to remember that 50% of teen fiction books are being bought by adults.

Jo: when you take on a new book do you consider that adults will be more likely to buy books digitally

KB: digital is front and foremost in our thoughts right now especially for those crossover books. For children doesn't outweigh the high street.

CJ: because of fifty shades adults are now buying more adult books

Q: sales and marketing, I've seen a book the director of the company seems to really love but sales and marketing seem to be the deciders. Has it got worse.

KB: if you can't get sales and marketing excited then perhaps the book isn't right.

Q: when I tell people I'm writing fantasy it seems to turn people off. Should I be economical with the genre and not use the word 'fantasy'.

KB: but fantasy is huge, Christopher Paolini and Terry Pratchett are our biggest sellers. maybe you're not talking to the right editors.

Fiona: You mentioned swearing as something not to put in your books. When the kids are in the playground they all swear so why is swearing still taboo in fiction?

CJ: but it's okay for some authors, so why are some allowed to swear.

KB: I've never had to ask an author to tone it down. But when selling to book clubs you can't have swearing,

Q: the lady over there said were not talking about 8 year olds, could we talk about them.

KB: this is a genre I love and it's so exciting.

Q: I'd like to see a lot more junior fiction. At HotKey we ran a young writers prize and 70-80 percent were in the older category.

Q: what about educational publishing. this seems to come with a list of things you should not include, which is censorship. Dark subjects are being excised from educational books for children.

Q: question about the length of the publishing cycle and it can take three to four years to publish a book. Can take a year to read something and feed back. Is there any sense that you need to speed up.

KB: can't really compromise on things like the cover, also working to a retailing cycle.

Summing up:

CJ: You have to write what you want

KB: have an authentic voice.

Joe Godwin (BBC Children's Controller)

introduced with the comment: "It is said that children are the most discerning of all audiences."

With five minutes of getting here I met someone who's book has been turned into a BBC drama and someone who's book is about to be.

children are a discerning audience, joyous in their curiosity and meaning of quality.

Some people think my job is a junior sort of thing because it's kids programme but children unlike adults don't consume crap they're not interested in.

There are 35 dedicated children's channels in the UK. Children for the BBC means people twelve and under. 12 million children.

TV is not the only thing children do. media is one of the most complex mediums in the world right now for children, Children have much more smart phones and technology now, Ceebeebies and CBBC are the children's channels he runs, very successful. Watched more than any other and both have a broad mix of genres, Not just comedy and animation: news, drama, factual, etc etc. That breadth marks it out as what the BBC should be doing. BBC is to be distinctive and offer public service content.

Children are discerning, they don't want the easiest option, they want to have their brains tickled.

I am called the Director of Children's - there isn't another word after that but the invisible word is probably services.

Each channel has a controller and a large In house production dept. We make about 50% of our programmes.

Not there to out Disney Disney were here to do something different, You will see more children with disabilities on children's TV than you will see in your life.

Everything we do is storytelling, from news round to Blue Peter, Drama has always been very important, Feeling that there was a golden age of children's drama from 1978 to 1994. BBC and ITV competing with each other. I actually think now is the golden age because the choice is greater. the production values of what we make are comparable with anything you see in prime time and that's partly because children watch so much prime time and Hollywood movies that they expect it. I loved Rentaghost but you might remember everytime someone closed a door the set shook.

every self respecting organisation has to have a mission statement: "to create unforgettable content to inspire children all across the UK"

The purpose could be to help them relax after a hard day at school, to see something new about the natural world or to think differently about other people and how they relate to them.

Important that what we do reflect today's UK. were not there yet but that's what we're aiming to do.

Storytelling on BBC children's doesn't have to be fiction. There was a discussion earlier about finding a new word for non-fiction.

Horrible Histories has won five awards, has inspired children to be interested in history. There are clever ways to do things. Not Education with a capital E. There's a lot of learning in what we do but it's not curriculum based.

A programme about to come on to creepiest called What's the Big Idea.

What do we do with books? We turn a lot of them into television programmes. eg Tracy Beaker. just William. Rastamouse. Optinants. Tilly and Friends.

Tracy Beaker was three books and now is 84 episodes of TV programme.

Other ways to work with authors. Original ideas don't have to have been a book. You can go to the BBC writers room which is a fantastic resource. Schemes, advice, master classes and a huge library of television scripts.

opportunities to write things for existing ideas, Jackie Wilson didn't write all the episodes of Tracy Beaker.

two way street, Feeling in the past that TV writers think writers are prima donnas and authors think TV programmers don't understand books.

That's not true any more, Every night on the BBC there's a goodnight story read. Books section on Blue Peter, I talk to a lot of children who do read as result of things they've seen on TV.

A lot of people live in houses or soon will in which broadcast television and the internet can be accessed with the same control.

If you write for children's television you need to know what it's like. It's not like TV when we we kids. We don't want stuff that's an adult perspective about children. Nothing patronising. You know the audience it's important you also understand our role is to be diverse and inclusive.

Q: when you started this job you said you wanted to increase serious factual content. How's that going?

JG: I think it's going very well. You saw in that clip Alesha Dixon talking about domestic violence and her family. we've done bereavement, online grooming, problems with alcohol. you can do anything on children's television so long as you do it in an age appropriate way.

inspiring programmes that show all kids how challenging other kids lives are.

Don't have to dress factual programming up as entertainment.

Children get quite outraged by the difficulties of other peoples lives and want to know what they can do about it.

Q: you mentioned how TV deals with books. It seems to be it would be good if BBC TV could celebrate books a bit more, eg programmes that look at what's out and there and discuss them. There are teens online taking about books on YouTube. At book awards up and down the country children are talking about books. BBC could make something out of that.

JG: you could do that, there's a challenge as to how you do it so it's not dull. I think we do celebrate books but not explicitly as that. Also some challenges about how you use commercial products. Also not all children are interested in children talking about things, interested more in adults.

Also don't have a remit to programme for teens

Mention of Wolf Blood which was written by someone who sent in a script to the BBC writers room.

Q: how much longer do you think children's programming will be on BBC one.

JG: I know the answer but it's a secret! Children's programming will always be on BBC one but not as a block every day.

I don't think it matters. Were thirty years on from the first children's programming. Children don't look for their programmes on BBC one they are looking to the digital channels. the issue is more likely that adults who don't have children don't know that the BBC also make children's programmes because they won't bump into them by accident when waiting for the news.

But on a case by case basis children's programmes will be shown on BBC one.

Q: if you're an author with a story with a strong visual element who should the author approach.

JG: can either submit a book or a script to an independent production company or directly to the BBC. We might option it for development. All the details are on the BBC's commissioning website. bbc.co.uk/commissioning numerous ways to do it. Don't send the whole book but make contact with a one page synopsis.

Fiona Dunbar: I recently had a TV series turned down by you, a TV production company submitted an adaptation.

What percentage of new original programmes are being made by all these channels.

JG: if you think of the main children's channels cartoon network is mostly cartoons and those are mostly from the US although not all. Nickleodeon and Disney are predominantly comedy dramas made on the west coast of the US. Nickleodeon have shown a few series of a UK work called House of Anubis but I think that's their only one.

Disney make some UK factual entertainment programmes.

Nick Junior and Disney Junior do make some more UK programmes. Animation can easily be made appropriate to the audience. We don't fully fund preschool animation we club together with other companies and they take years for that very reason.

Q: is it true you only do two animations a year.

JG: I don't know exact numbers, but we do hundreds of animations, might be coproduction or things we have acquired.

Q: what's in it for illustrators?

JG: some of our programmes do use illustrations eg commissioned from Nick Sharratt for Tracy Beaker

Q: Will Jackanory never come back?

JG: never say never but wouldn't come back in the form I watched it as a child. We do so much more than Jackanory now in the way stories are told and dramatised. 40 years ago in terms of television technology. the spirit of Jackanory is there in television.

Prequels and sequels

Patrick Ness, Geraldine McCaughrean and Charlie Higson,

PN: my editor at walker brought me the idea two years ago of A Monster Calls. I knew Siobhan Dowd died far too early and far too soon and there was an opening chapter a few character and an email shed written filled with excitement and enthusiasm. She had a structural idea, three stories told, and she didn't say any more. My first reaction was to say no but whenever I've tried to write for any other reason than a story desperate to be told, for what a publisher or market would want, it's never worked. It's only when I've written whatever the hell I wanted that it's been the stuff people wanted to read.

I thought that doing this even for the best possible reasons, making a memorial to someone as fantastic as Siobhan, would make a bad book. But her ideas and enthusiasm inspired me. I said I wouldn't take it on unless I had complete freedom for the story to grow and that's how I approached it. I had that freedom and then I went on my way.

JE: was the writing process different from your own book

PN: no, it was the same.

JE: You wrote Peter Pan in Scarlet, you won a competition to write it.

GMcC: I only went in for the competition because my husband was reading the newspaper and saw about the competition, I dedicated a weekend to write a sample chapter and a synopsis. It was just for fun. If it has been a serious commission I would have frozen in fear but because it was a competition I just did it.

When I got the phonecall to say I'd got it I got the idea that everyone else who went in for this across the world would hate me. And the people who don't like sequels and the journalists who rang me up. Then the panic set in. It was different from writing any other book.

I did have constraints placed on me by Great Ormond Street Hospital. They owned the rights in this book, they stipulated there should be no health issues, Peter Pan shouldn't do drugs or smoke. Mustn't repeat anything that had appeared in a film. Had to get in as many of the characters as I could from the original book. It was supposed to feel like a sequel and pick up JM Barrie's style.

I had written a synopsis for the competition. every synopsis is a work of fiction and not legally binding. But with this for once in my life I wrote a book knowing what the plot was. Generally I write hoping that the end will take me by surprise. I never plan my books because I don't think you should.

JE: Was it a book you loved as a child

GMcC: we had it, it was one of the few we had, but I never remember it really. It was the very first play I went to see and I hated it.

JE: Charlie you picked up the Ian Fleming baton with the young James Bond and had very little to go on.

CH: I was approached by a woman called Kate who had been my editor before with adult books and she said I couldn't tell anyone about it. She was looking for someone to write new James Bond books because the Ian Fleming estate wanted to remind everyone it started with the books - especially because they didn't own the film and TV rights.

I wondered where you would even start and they said they were looking for a children's book. Then I got very excited,

You had to be someone who was a fan of the Fleming books, had a style that would work. They could get on with and could get on with the estate. Also had to be able to write. I ticked all the boxes.

I have three boys and was looking for something like this I could write.

I thought you could scale James Bond down and do all the James Bond things but at a kids level.

I knew they were talking to other writers including Anthony Horowitz. In the end we all met in a secret location in a volcano and I pulled a lever and all the other writers fell into a shark tank.

Fleming changed the facts from one book to another, keeping the author at aged 30, and the background slid around a bit. The internet wasn't around and he never expected anyone to write complicated timelines.

There was enough space for me to make things up but frustrating because you want something to hang on to.

James Bond has no wife or kids, never does the washing up. lives in hotels and is allowed to kill people. You don't see the backstory.

In *You Only Live Twice* they think Bond has died and M writes his obituary and it sketches in his childhood and that was my starting point.

JE: It's grown from the original contract?

CH: at the time they thought they'd get different authors to write each book and they thought no one would want to write more than one.

JE: What about writing sequels in general

CH: It's weird like having a proper job, when you finish one you start the next one.

JE: Patrick, *The Knife of Never Letting Go* was always envisaged as a trilogy

PN: I pitched it as a trilogy, I always like to know the last line (that's one of my big tips as a writer) so I knew the last lines of all three books and I knew there was an overarching story that would come to conclusion.

I understand the appeal of starting a universe and wanting to tell more stories in it.

I do get comments from readers asking for a book four and I always say no.

Never say never but I wonder about being able to commit to it. My next YA book is unrelated and I like the challenge of starting something new.

I like a story that finishes rather than one that stretches and stretches from a trilogy and onwards.

JE: You've just done a sequel to your little monk.

GMcC: I have a moral dilemma because I always think sequels are a bit of a con trick a way to get your £8.99 three times over.

My mother told me never boil your cabbages twice.

Stop The Train sequel was the first one I did because I really liked that book. I came up with a sequel *Pull Out All the Stops*.

I then got asked if I wanted to do a retelling of a story about an old Italian monk and then it turned out it was a trilogy that was wanted.

The public like a story to go on but I think it's really really important that every book stands alone however long it goes on.

CH: someone publishes a successful one off and then the publisher asks for sequels.

I felt that slightly with the *Hunger Games* that there wasn't enough for a trilogy.

My seven book series was conceived as a trilogy but keeps getting longer.

RL: what do you do when you get half way through a series and it doesn't get picked up?

CH: I don't know. I've had to go back and negotiate but it hasn't happened

G: I suspect it must be happening an awful lot with sequels being laid off, a terrible thing to do to your reading public when people have invested money in a series and it stops being written.

For various health reasons there was a good chance this book wouldn't happen but I'm going to make damn sure the third comes out, It keeps me awake at night thinking that someone had spent £16 pounds getting through a book

CH: I know a lot of Game of Thrones and I know a lot of people worry that he'll drop dead before finishing.

PN: got to look at the reasons why, is it a sales thing. these are hard questions.

There are options, other smaller publishers.

But it might not always be the publisher making a mistake.

Q: why don't Flemings estate own the films

CH: they do get money and they are consulted, Fleming sold the film rights for £12,000 and he thought this was a good deal. Fifty billion dollars later it's a contract that's been reviewed over the years. But fifty years ago people didn't understand the power of rights. Back in Flemings day no one knew the value of any of this.

Q: I've just finished a 4 book series and I wondered how you fit the back story into books 2 3 and 4 without it interfering.

PN: I think that if they're reading books two and three they've probably read book 1. tried to keep it to a minimum and not include anything the narrators wouldn't say, Supply the information by inference.

Young readers noticing everything and pick up everything. I err on the side of scaling to back.

GMcC: worst thing you could do is cram it all in to the first chapter of the second book.

Think of it as a railway carriage and you reveal a certain amount to the people you meet in that railway carriage but not too much because it will come out later.

The more hermetically sealed the more people can come to the story in the middle so I don't doubt that people will have started with Patrick's book and then gone back to the first. Characters carry their story with them. treat it like real life you only reveal as much as you would to someone on a bus.

CH: I started this story with a ten year old child and when I finish he'll be 17 and I know he won't go back and remember what happened in book one.

I find it useful for my readers to remind them of a lot as you go along.

The first chapter is vital and the less exposition the better

Q: one of the hardest things is where to start a book. Is that different in starting a series?

CH: I don't think so. You think of a trilogy of one book broken into three self contained books but everything starts in the same place.

PN: These are questions of confidence. even if you are worried act like you're not. It takes some time to develop.

Q: Has anyone had an experience that they've planned a series and after the first book the readers love the character you're planning to kill.

PN: I kill off my most beloved character in book one and get a lot of "you bastard" emails. For me I don't think you should give the reader what they want, I think you should make them want what you give them.

GmcC: This may be the future of internet publishing that people do give the audience what they want and take a vote on who is to survive.

Q: how much do you know how it's going to finish

PN: a great ending will cover a lot of sins, I don't necessarily know how I'm going to get there, I leave it free enough that I can be surprised. The ending of a Monster Calls felt inevitable to me and when the last line comes I felt confident enough to begin.

I knew the last line of all three books because they felt like devilish and nasty things to do. Bwahahaha (evil laugh)

someone asked how do you make a great film and a director said a great film has three good scenes and no bad ones.

For me I try to have about three scenes I yearn to write, I write in sequence and I look forward to writing those scenes but they leave me a lot of space in which to create.

Fiona Dunbar: Received wisdom with trilogies and series is that with each book the audience drops down.

CH: if my publishers had their way I'd be on the road every day . You have to keep promoting. the only way Lee Child can get shops to stock his back stock is to keep writing another book.

you've got to keep pushing it, Review space is very limited and they tend not to write the forth and fifth book in a series.

You have to treat each book as a standalone and kick ass.

JE: As the ass who often gets kicked, we never review second and third books, I knew I was going to enjoy this session. thanks all.

Glittering Prizes and Literary Festivals

How to Survive as a Writer Today

Robert McCrum, Jane Churchill , Tamsin Ace, John McLay

RMCC: I did write kids books a long time ago with Michael Foreman. My experience goes back to 1977 and I've seen the world of books change a lot from that time.

in the biggest paradigm shift since the 15th century. I don't think we've get begun to get the measure of what's happened. Not since the days of Gutenberg and Caxton has there been such a change.

The world that I have had my professional life in, the world of books from 1980 to 2010, was what you might call the long boom just as there was a boom in the economy and that was an aberration. Most people in books live hand to mouth. Go and read George Gittings New Grub Street. It could have been written yesterday.

Transformation of bookselling led by Waterstones and the growth of the big publishers.

I think the creative community and writers were overpaid.

Festivals were in a sense a symptom of this. They began as a symptom of the proliferation of titles, of sales and cash.

When I joined the Observer in 1996 there were 100,000 new books published a year. Today it's 200,000 despite the fact that publishers say they're cutting back their lists. A tremendous explosion of productivity. The boom is now over and many of us find that puzzling, distressing and difficult. Many writers today can't see the way forward. I can truthfully say I have no idea where we'll be in 2050.

Festivals do help to anchor the writer and the reader. The appetite for festivals amongst readers is a new phenomenon, Been through three phases:

first phase was festivals like Edinburgh and cheltenham

Second phase in the early 90s with Hay

now into a third phase that festivals founded in an an impromptu way on the 80s when there was a lot of money around are having to figure out how to conduct themselves.

One of the hard things is that it's very difficult now for readers to know where to go for th next new book. word of mouth does play a role. But prizes and reviewers have a role to play in shaping the literary weather. the role of the reviewer has been pushed more to the margin and the prizes have taken over,

Being talked about as a possible prize winner gives a book the profile it needs in a difficult market.

This is a golden age of reading, More people are reading on screens, text tweets, emails. More consumption of the written word in English than ever before.

Although we're all anxious we can take heart from the fact were living through a crisis with a very definite silver lining.

Q: so Tamsin what are you doing?

Tamsin: I have worked in venues all of my career, South bank Centre was built in 1951 as part of the festival of Britian to look at the future, Five years ago the royal festival hall reopened,Our Directors vision is to return the site to a festival site. When you stepped in you knew you were part of a festival. Midway through the festival of Britain there was a change of government and half the site was knocked down.

South Bank Centre now works as a festival format and we work all year round. They all have different themes and different focuses,

The Imagine Children's Festival started with a very ordinary format and was very popular. It's developed in that as an arts centre we have all sorts of other art forms. The festival as it was didn't really reflect that. When you stepped outside you didn't know you were part of a festival site.

Last year the book people came on board as a new sponsor. My job as a creative programme producer is to make suggestions about how to use the space.

We're open to suggestions and ideas but want to help you suggest your words to the best of your ability.

Not every author is able to perform in front of 2000 people or want to do that.

Q: so Jane what's inspired you, what amazing things have you seen?

Jane: Cheltenham is one of the oldest lit feats but there's definitely a need to make it more singing and dancing, We have free events and competitions at the weekend to involve people who might not otherwise be aware.

I've been involved for 15 years and its evolved year on year, Try to have a mixture of things to attract all sorts of people. trying to make it a huge family festival.

Q: what events are you looking for

J: going around seeing other festivals, speaking to publishers about their ideas, modifying those ideas. I like pushing authors slightly out of context. we had one with David Roberts doing a graphic workshop designing covers for teenage books.

Q: it seems you can't just come with your book and ad from it.

J: some are events with all sorts of magic happening and some are really good panel events in which people spark off each other and that's what I love.

Q: what not to do at a festival

J: don't answer your phone during an event, don't slag off a reviewer in public

Q: John what are some of your highlights and tips.

John: the bath lit test has only been going since 2007 but I like to think we've established ourselves as part of the festival circuit. When my wife and I set up the festival we realised that there weren't children's authors coming to bath in the way we wanted to see them. We came into it fully formed with eighty events and a national newspaper sponsor, over ten days,

It was a fascinating process setting up the festival. Talked to a lot of friends in publishing including publicists. Very important to us that we source our events through publishers, The reality of festival funding.... To ease the costs we had to source authors through publishers because they would then pay the authors expenses. We also pay our authors a modest amount £150 and there are some events that don't make financial sense. less than thirty people paying five pounds each means you make a loss even before overheads: staffing, venue space, printing.

You start with a list of who sells the most books and work your way down, You fill up a lot of your programme on that basis. but you do have space to include debut authors.

you also tend to have a lot of authors who are published around the time of your festival because the publisher will support a book tour.

I'd love to have you all because you're all brilliant but the commercial reality is we cant. we don't do themes we try to get the biggest and best authors and events that people will come and see

Jill and I lost twenty three thousand pounds in the first year running the festival. It is a labour of love.

Questions from the floor:

Graham Gardener?: festivals for all but a small minority for super authors seem to be a lot of trouble and publishers don't give a lot of support. Is it potentially worth the while of writers.

JohnMcLay: my personal xp is that every publisher sends authors.

We both work for each other, it's not just about the session on the day, but as Charlie said authors have to keep working at publicising their books.

Jackie Wilson is still on the road, even with her success. They put in the legwork before and did school events to get their name out there.

We print a programme with fifty thousand copies and that's publicit for you.

It is disappointing when only twenty people come to your events but it's important that you do go to festivals.

Jane: You might only have twenty five teenage readers in your audience but they will be keen and speak to their friends, tweet and Facebook about it.

In the weeks after the festival there are big book sales and people go into Waterstones and then buy your book.

Robert: festivals are a word of mouth event and hugely important

Q: Robert how does it work with papers, how do they choose what to review

Robert: the golden age of newspaper sponsorship is over. hard to see what return they could get. guardian covers Hay less than they used to now its sponsored By the telegraph.

We are a newspaper. A book isn't news and doesn't get the same coverage. For a book to become news it has to make waves in the news cycle. This is a commercial business and you should never lose sight of that fact.

Catherine Johnson: I find I get more of a turnout at smaller festivals than at larger ones.

Q: I think there's a real problem with children judging prizes... Not always fair or accurate.
A from panel chair: sometimes it feels for the author that they come only to be told you haven't won.

Tamsin: we have many moments throughout the year when we run events. We had polling booths three months prior to awards in Feb, but they didn't work because they were complicated with too many categories and the books weren't there So were now developing reading cafes so that people can read the books while they're there.

Q: every author fears they'll come and the books aren't there, what's the protocol for that?

Jane: we try very hard to make sure the books are there but inevitably there will be a surprise and something's reprinting and the author doesn't know what's happened. All we can do is apologise.

Tamsin: Foyles are our partners and we've made a commitment that our programme will be pinned down by the end of October and if you come to us do make a fuss if your book isn't there,

Robert: one last tip. there's always another author who has a huge line.

Was on a panel in folkstone with Martin Jarvis. He made his line longer by spending time talking to each person for five minutes, I commend this to you.