

Episode 67-Rachel Done on Eco-Friendly Publishing Distribution Practices

Emily Einolander 00:21

Welcome to the hybrid Emily Einolander. We're mapping the frontier between traditional and indie publishing. Today, our guest is Rachel Done, who is here to talk about a study about how to make future publishing distribution practices forward thinking sustainable, eco friendly and profitable. The study was a partnership between Portland State University's publishing department (surprise!), PubWest, and the Independent Book Publishers Association, and was authored by Rachel Done, Rebecca Gordon, Megan Jessop, Stephanie Johnson Lawson, Alexa Schmidt, Rylee Warner, Glorimar Del Rio, Sarah Bradley, Alexandra Burns, Ivory Fields, Alexander Halbrook, Jill Bowen, Katherine Flitsch, Amanda Hines, Megan Vader Bongolan, Alexandra Magell, and Frances Fragela. It was supervised by Dr. Rachel Noorda.

Corinne 01:23

Rachel Dohn Cubillas is currently a freelancing publishing professional, which focuses on writing, design, marketing, and project management, basically a little bit of everything. They are set to graduate with their MA in Book Publishing and Comics Studies Certificate from PSU this coming June. They love exploring new topics and skills, as well as spending time with their menagerie of a family.

Emily Einolander 01:46

Welcome to the show.

Rachel 01:48

Thank you for having me. I'm so excited to be here.

Emily Einolander 01:51

We're really excited to have you here to talk about this today. With the dire situation we're in with climate change. I think a lot of people in publishing have trouble processing our carbon footprint, and maybe can't see alternative ways of doing things. So I think this is really important work. So thank you.

Rachel 02:10

Yeah, now, just for the carbon neutral aspect of the research, it was just astounding to read the data. And there's so many things that aren't in the publishing quarterly article that we're in the longer version. And even in that too, we had to cut so much data that's to be found, honestly, like in terms of, basically I think by 2050. If loggers continue at the pace that they do even with the you know, cut one and plant one practice, over half, if not 75% of America's forests will all be one type of tree. Which, to some people listening, this might be like, Oh, whatever big deal, but it is for the biodiversity aspect. And if so, for instance, like I know, for elms, they had the Dutch elm disease, right? So there's a kind of mutagen or something that attacks this type of tree, then you're looking at almost 75% of trees being affected by 2050. Right? If such a thing were to develop, which obviously with a pandemic, we can't predict, you

know, let alone for us, let alone for trees, right. So there's just so much statistical data that just shows that whatever we're doing now is just not sustainable in terms of printing both currently in the US and overseas.

Emily Einolander 03:38

Yeah, that's what happens with monocultures. That's the bigger risk of it is that if one thing bad happens to one, then it could happen to everybody and pass really, really quickly. So for sure,

Corinne 03:49

Okay, Rachel, could you start by telling us the research questions you use to guide the study? And what's your methods of answering those questions?

Rachel 03:55

So the questions were what needs to be done to make book printing truly carbon neutral by 2050. And then the next one was: as consumer buying habits migrate from retail to online, what does efficient and cost effective delivery of print books to readers look like going forward? A third was: although COVID-19 did not create the book industry supply chain problems, it certainly exasperated them. What chinks in the book industry's armor are most exposed due to the COVID 19 pandemic? The fourth question, what is stopping the industry from embracing print on demand as the preferred means for printing not illustrated black and white trade books? And then fifth, how can the book industry decrease the return rates for books sold and trade channels from an average of 30% to an average of 15% or less?

Emily Einolander 04:41

And then, can you talk a little about your methodology for researching this?

Rachel 04:47

Yeah, so because we kind of split it up between multiple like groups of people, the methods vary, but a lot of it was literature review. We did some surveys. Some people did. did interviews where they just basically did close readings of already compiled interviews. And just a lot of we talked a lot to PubWest and IBPA board members and stuff to really kind of get their idea of what the lay of the land was, and what they had been hearing from their members. And what some of the things for them, they thought were plaguing the industry and why.

Emily Einolander 05:25

And did they collect a lot of data? Or was it mostly like anecdotal stories from people who are in their organizations?

Rachel 05:33

Um, email through some of them? They had depended on the question, what kind of information we were asking about, like, for instance, for returns, Michelle Cobb has really great information. And so does Andrew Boyle, who are both heads of their respective organizations. So they had really great stats on that, and even for the carbon neutral aspect. I talked to Karla Olson, who is the head of publishing for Patagonia and, and Sonia Moore, who is their printer, or the head of their printing

distribution. And so when we talk to them in depth, you know, they had some really great numbers, and they're also compiling their own articles and sources right now, I think, as we speak. So they had some good polls, but in some of the more general conversations, I think we as an overall group had with IBPA and PubWest, it could vary a little bit if it was just like, This is what we're hearing through the grapevine, to Yes, here is this statistical number, but everything that is actually in the articles was verified. And we check that information and everything. It wasn't just like, hearsay, you know, of like, we just like, Oh, someone said this, let's quote it, you know.

Emily Einolander 06:49

That kind of stuff matches with the evidence, let's see what they think. So let's start with the first question. And this was the section you wrote, right?

Rachel 06:56

Yeah, this is the section I mean, me and Riley Warner and Dr. Rachel Noorda, we edited everything down from I think originally from like, it was like 40 pages altogether, down to what we have for QPR or for PRQ, which is I think, overall 30 pages or something like that. So basically, I think, every article from 10 pages to two or three. So yeah, it was a lot of information to crunch. But yeah, no, but yes, becoming carbon neutral.

Emily Einolander 07:27

What needs to be done to make book printing carbon neutral? By 2050?

Rachel 07:32

Yeah, that's such a loaded question. Because my colleagues were like, Oh, my gosh, we could write a novel about this. So, you know, it's that expansive of topic. And calculating carbon neutrality in and of itself is so tricky, right? Trying to maintain a deficit of zero. And so when we were really thinking about this, we try to think what is the thing that indie publishers and big publishers need to know the most. So one of the things that was common was printing, print, or what we call printed plant, and pulping is just or printing plant is just not enough anymore. We can't just do you know, oh, we cut down one tree and we you know, donate or make sure that lumber mill planted a tree and it's paid doesn't really work anymore. Because there's so many factors into that tree actually surviving, to grow. But also, like I talked about a little bit earlier, the biodiversity of that tree. And so there's a lot of equations into that. And then pulping, actually, we need to use materials. And from the outset, think about pulping books, if we're going to continue this kind of practice of over selling books and then getting returned, right? It's just a huge waste monitoring. And most of the time, for pulping. We can't actually pull up a book because of the glue or the ink that's used,

Emily Einolander 08:57

Could you give a really quick summary of what pulping is, because I've noticed a lot of people don't know what that is, or that it even happens.

Rachel 09:06

Yeah, so pulping is basically taking an already printed and bound book, and then unbinding it and then basically shredding it, and then bleaching and chemically processing the paper, basically. So it can go

back to like if we're talking about like the water cycle, but for books, right for making paper going back into the pulp fiber, and then it's pressed into making effects. Finally, a sheet of paper, right, that can be printed on. So if it's used correctly, and if we start from the offset of thinking about popping a book, right, if that becomes a potential, then it feeds itself, right. It's the cycle that will continue to feed itself. But again, most of the time, because we're overselling and then we're not thinking about what are we going to do as excess inventory? The pulp gets wasted, right? Actually, it can't be reused again. In. And so energy efficiency wise, it's actually more efficient to make paper from pulp from already processed books, or what we would call post consumer waste paper. It's actually much more efficient and all across the board to use PCW paper than it is what we call virgin paper, which is paper that has never been recycled before. And straight from the lumber mill.

Emily Einolander 10:25

That's amazing. I mean, that sounds like it would be really good news, right? Yes, but you're saying that things like the glue and the ink, kind of preclude it from being used in the way that it could be?

Rachel 10:39

Yes, it's the main deterrent, and then also just basically, our infrastructure, and we get the nurses mentioned a little bit further in another way in the paper, but the infrastructure of our mills aren't set up to pulp anymore, is part of the problem. A lot of our printing industry has migrated to China, and to a lot of other countries over seas. So essentially, in the pandemic, a lot of mills have closed, or they've decided to switch straight to commercial industries, right. So like toilet paper, paper packaging, things like that. And so either their equipment is not high enough standards anymore to actually process books into pulp them, or they're just not there anymore. So our printing industry has severely declined. And that's also leads to further on, like we talked about in the paper, if distribution problems because we're waiting for these papers to come for these books to come months and months and months. And so it just it like you can kind of see it's like a flowchart, right? Where I'm already some hinting at it, where it just one problem things off another problem another and another and another.

Emily Einolander 11:50

Yeah. Or pinball. And then you go down into the chute, and you lose. Yeah.

Rachel 11:56

But yeah, so. So there's those things. So I guess I'm, I'm going really long into your question. But basically, if printers could, or publishers could choose to use PCW paper as much as humanly possible, though, because the demand is, you know, not as high, the price is kind of high right now. But slowly, but surely, if we kind of just demand more and more and up that quantity a little bit more, the demand of the price will go down. So printers and publishers can choose to use PCW paper as much as humanly possible, but also choosing or investing in their print Mills, because the printing plan, again, works fine and dandy. But you also need to have these other options of the infrastructure itself to support not cutting down the tree in the first place. And then that also leads into race run offs and emissions. The paper industry is one of the top consumers of fossil fuels and co2 emitters into the, into the whole entire atmosphere, not just from the loss of biodiversity and the loss of carbon emissions that get released from the ground when the trees are cut, but also just in the sheer production of it overall. And so that leads into capital and labor, which is another way we talked about it is thinking that publishers need to

invest, they need to invest as much as they can by either supporting businesses that use PCW paper or work together to find the solutions with printers to make it happen. And that also includes paying people in the industry well enough to it's worth their time, right? That's like a big, the big, big, big thing. So there's lots of ways that we talk about the finishing, like in our recommendations of where people can start to get to these overall goals. But those would be the overall like 12345, you know, to kind of get to being carbon neutral as much as possible, because if we don't, we won't have paper to print on very soon.

Emily Einolander 13:59

It's so interesting that you're saying that the ability to pull has been reduced from the past, because so many of us think of progressing in a linear fashion to doing a better job. And to hear that we've actually regressed in that area is concerning.

Rachel 14:17

Yeah, I mean, there's a bigger conversation about American industrial, you know, facilities and just manufacturing in general to be had and that I think, paper mills are just a part of that equation. But most of the green printers we found that would be accessible to publishers are actually in Canada right now. So for instance, Patagonia, I can't remember the actual name of the mill, but the the mill that Patagonia uses, they're actually right next to a dump. And so they take the gasses from the, the gas emissions from the dump itself and use as part of their energy process. And then, like basically it's like, it's like a state of the art like, Oh my gosh, can't we have every plant designed like this? It's kind of one of those idealistic goals, but I definitely recommend checking it out in terms of like ideas like, what the future could look like, for American printers.

Corinne 15:13

Let's move on to the second research question. What does efficient and cost effective delivery of print books to readers look like going forward?

Rachel 15:22

Yeah, you know, there are a lot of different ideas, I think about this. And I think M commerce, e commerce and just, you know, normal kinds are all in a vast state of flux. With technology nowadays, one of the things that we've talked about in the program is doing pre orders. So this kind of mimics the gaming industry, or even movies and books, but actually pre-ordering, so you know, what your numbers are ahead of time. So you can print accurately, and I think that's also where, you know, where we see a lot of Self Publishers going, right, or people are authors who are self publishing or indie publishers where they're doing Patreon or they're doing GoFundMe. And so they can get a more accurate call for their numbers. Another thing would be local and discounted delivery. So I think we've talked about in general, and I mean, the we as in society, from Amazon, right? How looking at local is the way to go? And so we can kind of think about that, in that sense to about where, how can we encourage local consumption of books that will overall reduce wait time, but also reduce emissions and all that kind of stuff?

Emily Einolander 16:37

Directly from the publisher?

Rachel 16:41

Yes, done directly from the publisher, or even just knowing that your local bookstore is going to have that book, right. And you can go and pick up that book there versus necessarily having it shipped off? And who knows where that warehouse is and Amazon? Right, that it could actually be like five states away?

Emily Einolander 17:02

Corinne has strong feelings about preorders?

Corinne 17:05

I do yes, I wish more authors would get excited about them, and market them to their, you know, their readers and everything. And yeah, it's an uphill battle. I mean, I work in publicity. And I've worked in marketing in the past. And it's always just like, push those pre orders. Come on, guys, you know, so but I'm always banging the drum for that.

Rachel 17:25

yes. And then there's also trade organizations like IBPA, or, you know, your local regional one, whether it's mi BA, or PMBA, and stuff like that, that's a great way to to kind of like get your book out there. And to get really people tapped into your book, especially if you're struggling for sales. And then this kind of taps into a larger narrative of book publishing and industry in general, but incorporating actual point of sale system, so many publishers actually just will have about them pages and their books and how to contact them, but they won't have selling information, or you can't buy the book right there. Right. And so that kind of defeats the purpose of having an online website. It's not only it's it kind of destroys a sales funnel of where you need to let the consumer know who you are. And then they need to buy the book, right? And there's no option for them to buy the book right then and there. You know, you kind of just destroy your own attention that you bring to yourself.

Emily Einolander 18:27

Yeah. Or they have the friction of having to go to another website for it at the bottom of the page. Just like blink to buy it here. It's like, oh, no, which one do I choose? Do I do, like Books a Million? Do I do Amazon? Like, what is the moral choice? I'm bored

Rachel 18:40

Yeah. Yeah, well, also losing the button to Amazon, too. So people really want to make your sales, right. It's better to them Be like, Hey, here's our book right here, you can buy it, right than losing it to a third party seller on Amazon, if they have to go find the book, which happens so often. And not to mention to just, I think, to that whole premise of I think Amazon will surcharge you if you don't have enough inventory with them, for people to pull the order. So you also not only do you lose the sale, but then you also can sometimes get charged money as well. So yeah, it just makes sense to have your actual websites be updated. And for them to be supportive of a point of sale system.

Emily Einolander 19:29

And if the author's doing pre orders, they can send you to that website instead. Yeah, Amazon.

Rachel 19:35

And we also talked about this a little bit later in the paper too. But there's also the potential of bundling ebooks, you know, into the sale overall price of the printed book itself, because we've seen in other research that people who really love an ebook will buy the printed book and people who really love the printed book will buy the ebook because they want to be able to read it anywhere. So they're not I mean, I think we think I think we've all thought especially like in LA and everything, we're like, oh, my gosh, the ebook will take over print books and print books. You know, I think we I think we've learned that that's not the case. It's time to not freak out anymore. And that they are not diametrically opposed. They're actually very symbiotic. If you're publishing, if you're marketing them, and face the supply chain issues, it would be a really great way to not have angry customers who are waiting for a book for forever in a billion years.

Emily Einolander 20:31

Yeah. Because you can kind of slake that hunger until you get the format that you really want.

Rachel 20:40

Well, that but also when it does finally come in, they're like, Oh, I'm excited. It's a book, right? Instead of be like, Oh, my gosh, it's taking forever, they finally got me my book. So it's two wildly different reactions, potentially, that one will definitely lead to probably more sales in the future, while the other one, maybe not so much.

Emily Einolander 21:03

And then that'll make it easier to figure out how many to prints?

Rachel 21:11

Exactly. ideas, and logic, the logic keeps feeding back into itself. It's amazing how that works.

Emily Einolander 21:15

We hate logic here. So in addition to some of the things you've already said, what chinks in the industry's armor were most exposed due to the pandemic?

Rachel 21:29

Yeah, I mean, I already kind of said it, but we just don't have the infrastructure for printing. Right anymore. Like we used to. I mean, again, Patagonia, I'll just use an example. They make beautiful books. Like if you ever go look at their catalog and everything, they make beautiful color, and black and white books, and they have no problems with their books, right. But they use completely 100% PCW paper, right? And it's all from here. And that's the problem is that we are relying so much right now on Asia to print high grade resolution, colorful pictures, and there's nothing. I'm not trying to be like, we can't export our business. I'm not trying to like,

Emily Einolander 22:14

oh, no, you don't sound like that at all. Yeah, getting that vibe.

Rachel 22:18

No, no, it's just like, I'm trying not to like that's not the vibe that we're trying to convey. But there is the very logistical equation of, okay, it has to cross an ocean to get here, because books are too heavy to get on a plane. Right?

Emily Einolander 22:36

Yep. Yeah, so I've got a lot to deal with over there, especially if these are generalized plants, right. So we're not going to necessarily prioritize, you know, one specific industry's needs.

Rachel 22:48

And then there's also the poll problem, right? I mean, we have a probe problem ourselves, and Asia does as well, because of the same practices that were talking about earlier in the carbon neutrality, right. And so they just so not only do we not have enough printers, and they don't have enough technology, we literally just don't have the material to print, right. And then there was the shipping issues, which, you know, it's a very complicated, it's like five different plates at the same time, right? Where we have the labor issue, right, so you have people who are sick, who can't be there. And then we have the need for a lot of medical supplies to be prioritized in terms of shipping, right, and like emergency or essential materials. So then you got this backlog, right. And then we have the ports that are congested, because of the lack of labor, right. And so then, somewhere in between there, the labor started coming back, and we started getting the non essential items also shipped as well. But then there was this huge backlog, waiting to be shipped. And it just created this bottleneck situation where there was not enough hands or time or money, you know, and in terms of just in general for things to really get prioritized. And then there was the whole Suez Canal issue, which is another No. That's a whole other basket. But you know, when we have those issues, right, we had ships that were just bleeding in ports. Wow, you know, around, not just like in the US, but around the world that you know, and so then we had chips that were missing, we're like, where's, you know, ship, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And like, oh, in Taiwan, when it needs to be in like Puerto Rico, right. So you have the ships are just like, kind of MIA. And so you can't really actually plan a distribution route if you don't have to. The vehicles right? Are the modalities to get these, these these products across. And I'm like I kind of mentioned the labor, right? One of our co workers was like, you know, I'll read this correctly. For instance, companies like Walmart can afford to pay employees 1950 an hour with full benefits. And I can tell you as a graduate right now, I have seen plenty of publishing jobs that are like \$15 An hour \$13. Now \$17 an hour, you know, and I'm not trying again to say Walmart sucks, or anything like that. Don't come at me, Walmart. That's not what I'm trying to say.

Emily Einolander 25:38

Yeah, come at us Walmart. Yeah. We take responsibility, Rachel does not.

Rachel 25:45

I'm not trying to say that. But at the same time, you know, for a lot of people who are entering an industry where it's highly skilled labor, if that's the expectation of we, there's a, there's a very missed demand being met of, okay, you need to have two or three years of experience, but we won't let you in. But then when you get the two, three years experience, we're going to pay you like you have none before, right, and stuff like that. And then also, there's the whole mid-career burnout, that's happening

systematically throughout the publishing industry because of the lack of pay. So that's just, you know, on the worker office side, let alone the distribution side. So overall, everyone's not happy about being paid less, and so they just don't stay. So there's no one really command the helm. Right? Right. So there are some solutions in talking about this. There's the transparency of wages, the transparency with customers, customers prefer to be like, Hey, we can't give you your book, because it's stuck on a boat somewhere. And we don't know where it is. Right? There's a certain point, I think we've learned, especially in the pandemic, that that redic like, even if it's a ridiculous situation, we all kind of just like, okay, that makes sense. Well, we'll be okay. Right. So there's, there's, we'll just deal with it. So there's that aspect, and then print on demand, which I think, you know, a long time we've a lot of publishing, traditional publishing has kind of looked snobbishly on print on demand, being like, it's not as good paper, it's not as good everything. Well, that's not necessarily maybe 10–15 years ago, that might have been the case. But that's not the case anymore. In some ways, Print On Demand Books, or facilities are actually more technologically advanced than some of the other mills that are happening right now. And at least they like kind of specialize in doing books, which says a lot too about their infrastructure. But especially if you're doing a black and white book, it really shouldn't matter that much. And there's so many things with print on demand now that it's not just like, oh, I can only print a book this size, blah, blah, blah. It's so customizable at this stage in the game, that it's really a good way that you can kind of relook at printing in the US. And then you have less supply chain issues, because you're not literally waiting for your shipment to come across a C, right or a continent. But that's the thing too, is that like, one of the things we found out circling back a little bit, is that one reason why printers will say, Oh, we don't do PCW paper, is because they don't have a paper broker that will offer it to them. So you can just completely cheat the system by being like, Hey, here's my paper, you buy the paper, and you supply it to them, they print on that paper. So there's no, there's not really because like, that's, we kind of see this as like lobbyists in general, right? We're like, you know, there's the there's the, there's the publisher, there's the print mill, and then there's the printer, sorry, and then there's the paper broker. And then there's the mill itself, the paper broker here helps trickle down the rest of the prices for the rest of the chain. Right. And they're the ones that talk and also mill and so it makes sense and allow as if they're like, Yeah, we just want you to print on Virgin paper. We're gonna make PCW paper as high as possible, right? But that's not you know, you can you can go to a paper broker. And that's, I think what Patagonia started out doing, actually, if I remember correctly, I could be wrong. But um, but they were like, Yeah, we want to do PCW paper. We've bought the paper here, here you go.

Emily Einolander 29:37

The human urge to just take whatever is in front of you, and whatever is the easiest choice is so strong.

Rachel 29:44

It is and it's not like technology doesn't help us resist that urge, you know,

Emily Einolander 29:49

ya know, we're all impulse driven more than ever before. And, you know, I'm no exception, of course.

Corinne

Yeah.

Rachel 29:58

But then the last thing I'll say about the print on demand that we recommended to is adding a third shift to printing specials. And having the process become more automated. So in terms of pre orders, right, you have that first initial batch of you know, these are confirmed sales, right? And then thinking about after that, okay, here's how well the book is doing from our original estimate, right? Here's a third print run for those extra books, right? Yeah, that we think we're going to sell. But we're not going to overshoot what we can based off of these pre order numbers. So adding a third shift will help stagger things. So you're not relying on one huge entire shipment of books.

Corinne 30:44

So how can the book industry decrease the returns rate for books sold into trade channels from an average of 30%, to an average of 15% or less,

Rachel 30:53

We have to work with bookstores to do this, because obviously, they're our seller or main pillar of books. And so we can't just like, you know, yank the carpet out from underneath them. I will just preface with that. But part of it is we're gonna have to start being serious about not taking returns is the short story, right? It's both not taking returns, and this is the contract we're going into, and in a combination of those, you know, making more accurate or reduced print runs. Because the idea of what we've been doing, where we're gonna oversell by 30%, and then receive, you know, that those books back not only is a contributor, obviously, the carbon printing that was the carbon neutrality chapter that we talked about, but it's outdated. It's from World War Two, like that business model in of itself. And, obviously, I mean, you could talk to any economist or business analyst, right. And they will tell you that, like, obviously, business in itself has changed drastically, let alone you know, in the last 10 years, let alone 20 years, 30 years, right? So there were a couple of things. So increase the discount rate and refuse returns, penalize wholesalers with high returns, reduce print runs in general, control the release of new titles, especially in slow moving segments. And we've kind of talked about two, I think, in one part of the paper where if booksellers are really hesitant about a new author, and how well that book will do, right, we can kind of change those rates a little bit. But if it's like, for instance, a Stephen King novel, we know it's going to do well, we know it's going to sell pretty well, decently right, then that's where we're implementing those things of like, we refuse to return, or it's severely penalized. But then we go into the end, or minimize the mid list, right, the idea of that, and then convince booksellers not over order and avoid overselling the potential a book, which is another big aspect where I think booksellers sometimes don't get, they're not as in touch with their readers as much. And so they oversell the potential of a book or even, or even that's also on the fault of the publisher too or the, like the marketing and the publicity team or even the author when they're thinking, Oh, this book is gonna be a blockbuster and it flops.

Emily Einolander 33:23

And acquisitions.

Rachel 33:27

Yeah, exactly. So it's on both sides of the equation. But one thing that we didn't get talked about in the article is one thing we can learn about is actually from the comics industry, the comics industry doesn't do returns, they just don't, and they haven't for pretty much the majority of printing comics. Right. So

that is one thing that if we're talking about books, and we already have a model for it. Comics already does this, where they just don't do returns. And so comic booksellers are very selective in how much they'll order and what they will order.

Emily Einolander 34:09

No, that's, that's fascinating. I actually didn't know that about comics, I have a lot to learn in that department. But that seems like a much more realistic way to approach things than just just print a whole bunch of them and then we'll sell them and if they don't work, we'll rip them into tiny pieces and who knows where it goes.

Rachel 34:28

But ya know, so it's, we're gonna have to work with booksellers and some of them will definitely walk. I think this in general. It's not going to be an easy overnight kind of thing. But it's kind of the future of what we need to do if one we want to keep printing on books, right, that are not getting poked properly, right. So we're, we're running on a finite amount of gas, so to speak, for just getting our books across As in general, that aren't being recycled properly. But then in addition, it's just not sustainable business practice. And we need to update with the times of not only having from that direct point of sale, but we're thinking about, what does it look like in the bookseller, right, in that third party market? And that is, you know, again, we're thinking about rewriting contracts.

Emily Einolander 35:28

Well, and it also seems like that if we create sustainability as a shared goal that doesn't make publishers and booksellers at odds with one another, if you're looking at profits, and if you're looking at this as a competition, as we tend to do, then I can see why there would be more friction between the booksellers and the publishers. But if that contract is like, we're trying to accomplish this goal of not wasting things, then that's something you can do together and do as a collaborative project.

Rachel 36:02

Yeah, well that and there's also just I think, to it again, like I prefaced with this part each, we don't need to pull the rug, right. It does not need to be this really sudden, like, we're gonna do this. And then everyone riots, because it just it creates misunderstanding and creates this sense of rejection, right? And creates a sense of alienation of like, we won't sell books anymore, if you know you're going to return them, right? It just creates a standoffishness that's not necessary.

Emily Einolander 36:30

It's adversarial, like we see with publishers and Amazon, for instance, there's always this feeling of like they want to put us out of business. And I can see how booksellers might have that kind of knee jerk reaction if publishers start making rules that seem threatening to them.

Rachel 36:47

Yeah, exactly. And so I think it like we talked about, I think, in the paper, we can, it can be a gradual thing, where eventually over time, like, it's maybe the first thing in a new seller contract is like, you know, we will charge two cents, five cents, 10 cents per book that's returned back to us enough where there is a UI, that's not going to feel great, right? That it makes people think twice, but not like oh, this

would devastate them, if they return this many books, and they've had a bad season, right? You know, so not something like that. But maybe that's the first thing that they do. Or if it is a new offer, that's not really got a great track record, we can talk about, you're allowed to return 50% of the stock that you buy, right, could be another one. And if you do return more than that, then that's where the fees would come in. Right. So it doesn't have to be where we're kind of dumping everything in the booksellers hands where they take all the risk. Currently, the I would say the publishers have been taking most of the risk for this venture for a very, very long time. And it's just, it doesn't do anyone actually really any good favors both for the labor for what we as publishers can afford to pay our employees, which would then produce better books if we paid them better. But then also, we would have, again, less of these distribution and solution problems because you have more consistent labor and people and then you get to a really deliverable product. And then that last step of working with the seller of the product to make sure that it's not being wasted, it's going to a good place in terms of everyone is happy with the deal.

Emily Einolander 38:39

This actually makes me happy. I don't know, I love hearing people's ideas about how to make things better. And I know that everything is a bit doomy right now. But this is optimistic.

Rachel 38:50

Yeah. And that's good. That's what we wanted to do. Like, I mean, it, I will admit, with carbon neutrality being the first before the paper, you know, it's like, then there's also the American printing system. I think there are times and you've read that paper and you're like, oh, my gosh. But yeah, there are a couple of times we're like, oh my gosh, this is such a big problem when I'm such a tiny little person, ya know, and I think that's common, especially with just the world in general. But I think it's, this conversation can really truly start anywhere. Like, for instance, and maybe Oregon is a little unique in this. But after Black Lives Matter really kind of had its very huge uptick during the pandemic, especially in the Portland area. You know, we as a press were like, Okay, we really need to sit down and make this part of our core values of where we think about race and diversity. And so we reread what we wrote, we read our mission statement, we thought about all together And then we also I mean, our acquisitions team is doing fantastic. But Kelly, Amanda and Kelly, who were the Acquisition Manager of CES last year, we have, I think, at least one BIPOC, either subject, or author, who's publishing every quarter for the next couple of years. Good, right. And in an area that is the Pacific Northwest, which most people think is very whitewashed, which they're not necessarily completely wrong, in terms of like the general overall demographics, but there is race and diversity here, and it should be represented. So you know, that's one example of where we made a cultural shift that we're going to prioritize this. And now if reflected in our business, and so the same thing can happen to when we talk about printing, and sustainability, and distribution, we can look at it and like, Okay, this is what we're gonna do, how do we get to these steps, and it's just a slow butcher track, it's not something I mean, it's the whole realm was not built in a night overnight kind of thing. But it's a thing where there needs to be a consistent and conscious effort by everyone, not just higher ups, and not just by people who are lower in the chain of command.

Emily Einolander 41:18

And it is something especially you focus mostly on small and medium publishers for this. And Ooligan, again, is a small publisher, you made those, you made those progressions on a smaller scale. But if there are several different businesses making changes on small scales in this way, then, you know, momentum, etc.

Rachel 41:42

Oh, yeah, no, I mean, for sure. Like if, again, I kind of mentioned this already about PCW paper, but it's the cost is usually considered too high right now for, you know, indie or small publishers. And, honestly, you can start with 10%, PCW. Paper, it doesn't have to be 100%. You can start with 10, you can start with 20. And three, Frank, two books have been under sold for a long time. We I mean, we'll get to this rising your prices on books right now. We're and that's not just us being like, oh, we need to, you know, be we need to be above the price. Now. That's the competitive price. Everyone's raising their prices right now. And so hopefully, in the bottom line, when we think about these issues overall, right? We're thinking about the holistic process. And then if we need to raise our book, one more dollar, two more dollars to make the ends meet. And that's kind of what we might need to do.

Emily Einolander 42:57

Do what you got to do the shift in priorities?

Rachel 43:02

It's, that's what I would say. Yeah, I mean, at the end of the day, and I know that, for the Indian small publishers, business owners who are listening to this, they might be like, well, that one cent really makes a huge difference for me, I can't ask to do more. You know, I would encourage them to think about where could they flex? Maybe it's not their dollar right now. But could they think about printing less paper? Could they, for instance, do non printed galleys, could they do only ebook galleys to like Edelweiss, or something like that. That's one way Patagonia, for instance, has curbed their carbon emissions and carbon neutrality. So they don't do any printed documents anymore, almost ever with their books. It's almost all digital. And everything that they do we use with those books, they get reuse in some way or form. Right? So you can work with your existing assets in itself. To get to these solutions. It's just a question of the priority of what you decide to do.

Emily Einolander 43:58

Rachel, can you tell us where people can find you online, please?

Rachel 44:04

Yes, you can find me on LinkedIn. And I believe I sent you my website as well. But it's Rachel, Rachel Jones, obs.com. And that should be available. Forever. I think you guys will be posting this information. Yeah,

Emily Einolander 44:18

this will be on our website. And it's linked through all of our social media.

Rachel 44:33

Yeah, so you can definitely put some links via social media and look over my stuff. In general, there is a lot that is there. And there's also a lot that I still have in the works too. So feel free to just hit me with a message and I'll get back to you.

Emily Einolander 44:38

Fantastic. You can find us on [hybridpubscout.com](https://www.hybridpubscout.com) and SoundCloud or the listening app of your choice, Twitter [@hybridpubscout](https://twitter.com/hybridpubscout), on Instagram at [@hybridpubscoutpod](https://www.instagram.com/hybridpubscoutpod). We are on Facebook but I am kind of neglecting Facebook because it sucks. Yeah. Thank you Rachel. This has been amazing. Yeah, no problem. And thanks for giving a rip about books.