

**Guest Speaker Roger Jellinek, Literary Agent, Jellinek & Murray Literary Agency
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Mr. Jellinek began his talk with some information about a client he is currently working with. A lawyer and expert witness, she initially approached him about a novel she'd written. The novel itself wasn't very good, but the subject matter was fascinating. Mr. Jellinek convinced her to write a non-fiction book instead. After two years of nurturing and developing this project, he just submitted the proposal to publishers.

The problems he faced were the subject matter—a look at rape from the perpetrator's perspective—and a lack of previously published books dealing with this subject, which meant he'd have to convince publishers that there would be a market and an audience for the book.

Mr. Jellinek also told us about John Madinger, whose new book, *Death on Diamond Head* (A Kimo Rigg Mystery), is in stores right now. John Madinger also authored *Money Laundering: A Guide for Criminal Investigators* and *Confidential Informant: Law Enforcement's Most Valuable Tool*, and intends to write a non-fiction book about street crime in Honolulu, but has trouble attracting publisher interest. Mr. Jellinek explained that the locale was simply too specialized and mainland publishers didn't know what to do with it. As an agent, he recommended his client look to self-publish the book (Hawaii is a very lucrative self-publishing market). For funding, they looked at organizations and charities in the market for just such material.

After introducing us to the work he does, Mr. Jellinek opened the floor to questions.

What is a book packager?

A book packager is part agent, part editor, part publisher. Book packagers often pitch their own ideas to publishers and then find appropriate authors to work on that project. Or they may develop a book with authors they hire, researchers, editors, artists, photographers, printers and distributors. Hawaii, by the way, can be a very lucrative market for self-published books.

How are you paid?

As an agent, Mr. Jellinek receives 15% of an author's income. As a packager, he works for a fee plus small royalties.

What is your submission process?

Send a query letter and sample pages to r.jellinek@hawaiiantel.net

Do authors need agents?

No. Authors who deal with small publishers or university presses do not necessarily need agents. The agent step can be bypassed. The majority of authors, however, are best served by employing an agent.

Are agents typically as invested in their authors as you are?

No. Agents are business people. It is in their best interest to invest time and money in their authors, but there are plenty of authors and projects that need little work, which means taking the time to develop and nurture an author is becoming a luxury most agents cannot afford. That being said, there are always agents who'll take on projects they believe in, even if those projects aren't ready for publication yet.

What's an elevator pitch?

Two, maybe three, sentences that "sell" a book.

Does Hawaii read?

Yes. At last count there were 14 Borders and Borders Express on the island. The Borders at Waikale and the Borders Express at Mililani continuously outsell the rest of their respective chains in children's books. Barnes and Noble is about to open their second store on the island, and we also have an independent bookstore. The regional market is extraordinarily lively.

Who are the local publishers?

Island Heritage, Watermark, Mutual Publishing, and UH Press.

What's going on in the mystery market today?

Mysteries used to be much more categorized, but today's publishers are looking for original voices that can transcend genres and, increasingly, for the break-out novel. Formulas only work for romance fiction.

Is the business shrinking?

No, but it certainly does not have the sales and profit increases of other businesses.

What's with the gloom and doom surrounding the publishing business/the mystery market?

Gloom and doom is nothing new, but the business is changing. It's harder to find success. New, engaging media like the Internet are creating more discerning readers who are looking for entertainment and a good time from their books.

Print-runs have changed. It used to be that printing 50,000 copies was a great achievement. Today, with a book phenomenon like the Harry Potter franchise, printing 700,000 first editions isn't unusual. But the midlist is disappearing, which means predominantly smaller print-runs.

What is Bookscan?

Bookscan is a subscription program that tracks about 80% of book sales. Subscribers can get sales numbers by book, by region, by demographic, etc. Publishers look at past sales when dealing with "new" authors, even if their last book had nothing to do with their current book. The best way to hide past sales (hiding success in one genre might be as important as hiding failures in another) is a new pen name.

What is the future of the electronic book reader, like amazon's new Kindle?

Once the publishing industry finds a good electronic reader, using such a gadget will become more commonplace. This will probably happen in education and an educational setting first. Electronic readers are the future of books, but they haven't quite arrived yet.