

BIC conference showcases innovation in publishing

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Augmented books, AI-assisted information finding, booming audio books - and improvements to the humble invoice - all on the agenda at BIC's New Trends in Publishing seminar

The well-attended BIC New Trends in Publishing seminar, sponsored by Nielsen Book and held at Stationers Hall yesterday, covered everything from the use of Artificial Intelligence in publishing to retailers' Post-Pick Depression via immersive reality in the classroom, the advent of the 'abook' and the growth of the audiobook market.

David Frohlich, professor of Interaction Design at the University of Surrey, discussed a pilot project the university is working on with Bradt to develop abooks (augmented books), an extension of ebooks. Video, images and audio are all 'resident' augmented content included in the test publication, Bradt's Slow Guide to Cornwall, accessible while offline. More interactive content included such as phone numbers, timetables and location information needs to be accessed while connected to the internet, though this could be via platforms such as TV as well as handheld devices. The technology is, however, still at the 2G stage, with 1G being passive paper as invented some 2,000 years ago, though with 3G - paper that incorporates an electronic interface - only just around the corner.

Mark Christian, global director of Immersive Learning at Pearson, considered the current state of 360°, VR, AR and MR content in learning products. Pearson is now serving several million students worldwide with supplemental immersive experiences, and have evidence that this additional content is definitely encouraging better sales. There are four situations where this type of material works particularly well: in-programme assessment, where it leads to much greater involvement and better completion rates; simulation, where for example healthcare students can see the same hologram of recorded patients, thus providing scalability and standardisation; enabling students to go somewhere or experience something that's inaccessible in real life - the example given was exploring Chernobyl as it is now - and for classroom collaboration, whereby students can interact collectively with, for

example, 3D models of molecules.

Vicky Hampshire, VP business development of Yewno, spoke about the work the company is doing using AI to transform unstructured textual data into decision-making information. Having ingested huge amounts of academic texts its system can identify the categories covered in each text, their relative importance to each document and the hierarchy of sub-topics within each category, helping academics and students find the most appropriate works. Publishers too are finding this system helps them identify and classify their own products, enabling them not just to market and sell more effectively but to take a more strategic approach to acquisitions as well.

Simon Parker, business development manager at Batch, presented some recent work by Batch to solve the 'post-pick depression' experienced by retailers when publishers' new systems meant invoices were no longer included in all boxes. Batch has launched a new app which allows booksellers to scan deliveries and search by delivery note number, ISBN, order number or customer reference number, thus linking invoices and books more effectively.

Stephen Long, global managing director of Discovery and Commerce Solutions at Nielsen Book, spoke about the growth that Nielsen has been monitoring in the audiobook market - the only part of the book market that saw value growth in 2017. 36% of audiobook consumers were new to the market in 2017, while 37% had an audiobook subscription. Metadata standards for audiobooks at the moment are not as good as those for physical products - improvement in this area can only make audiobooks more readily discoverable for consumers, and thus help this vibrant market grow even further.

Further information about this event and the presentations can be obtained from karina@bic.org.uk

Pictured: Karina Urquhart, executive director of BIC, addresses delegates at BIC's New Trends in Publishing Seminar 2018 yesterday

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