



IBPA Executive Director Terry Nathan checks his email during a break at the IPNE conference in Manchester, NH, on November 8, 2008.

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What's in a Name Change?

An interview with Terry Nathan, executive director of IBPA (formerly PMA)

Those who have worked for large publishers for their entire career may not be familiar with the Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA, formerly known as the Publishers Marketing Association [PMA]). Begun as a cooperative marketing venture by fifteen California small publishers in 1983, the IBPA today boasts *four thousand* publisher members.

Publisher Alley began a professional partnership with the IBPA in July 2007, and in 2008 we attended our first Publishing University (sponsored by the IBPA and held just before BEA). In November 2008, the IBPA came to see us—in a way: the Independent Publishers of New England (IPNE), an affiliate of the IBPA, hosted a regional Publishing University in Manchester, NH.

The complexion of the IBPA membership has changed over the years, as many of the traditional financial and technological barriers to publication have disappeared. Some IBPA members intend to publish only one title, and others publish as a means of demonstrating their work's potential to the trade. Some are established independent publishers, and still others are primed to follow in their footsteps.

With this diversity in membership and recent changes at the organization in mind, it seemed appropriate to present this Industry Voices profile of the IBPA. After all, there is probably no larger collection of *industry voices* than the ever-growing membership of this twenty-five-year old, well-respected group. First, we present an interview with the group's executive director, Terry Nathan; second, we have reprinted with permission Terry's "Director's Desk" article announcing the June name change.

Interview with Terry Nathan

- Q.** How dramatically have membership numbers changed since the advent of digital page design and printing technologies? About how many new publishers join each month?
- A.** The membership has been going up steadily since 1994, with only a slight decline in the past twelve months. This is due primarily to the economy. Other reasons may include more options for self-publishers, publishers becoming self-sufficient, and the one-book publisher coming to the end of their title's run. New members range each month from fifty to eighty.
- Q.** Does the role of the IBPA change as a result of this change in member demographics?
- A.** IBPA is always reviewing and updating its marketing programs, member benefits, trade show activity, awards, etc. to keep up with the changes the members are going through, which includes technology, print-on-demand, self-publishing options, distribution, web presence, etc.



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Q. How do new publishers find out about the IBPA?

A. IBPA is marketed each month through its outstanding newsletter, *The Independent*. Because we are connected with many affiliate publishing organizations across the country, the information is available to the target market on a regular basis. Good placement at the major trade show events is also one of the prime ways to reach publishers. Members tend to pass our information on to their peers in print and through networking. Press materials that go out to the national press about our events, trade magazines, member news, and member websites keep IBPA in front of the new publishers. Finally, many suppliers to the industry, like Ingram, Baker & Taylor, most major printers, etc., direct people our way to help with their day-to-day challenges.

Q. Do you encourage authors to join IBPA as a means of learning the business, even if they do not intend to publish on their own?

A. We are currently looking at categories of membership for IBPA so that we can accommodate all who have an interest in publishing at whatever level they are when they call us. We are an association of publishers and encourage the authors who call to communicate with their publisher and encourage them to join IBPA so that we can help them promote and market their books through the publisher.

Q. Are there more members from one part of the country than another?

A. IBPA members are located all over the country. A few are even located internationally. There are concentrations of members in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Minnesota, and New York.

Q. What is the management structure of IBPA, and how is the organization funded?

A. IBPA is managed by Terry Nathan and Associates, Inc. and is governed by a professional board of directors. Terry Nathan is the executive director. Funding for the organization comes from member dues, marketing programs, events, awards, trade shows, and education (on-line and on-site).

Q. What is the role of supplier members?

A. Suppliers are a very important part of our industry and IBPA acts as a vehicle to connect our publisher members with capable suppliers. Supplier members are included in our membership mainly to support what we are doing and as a means of networking with our publisher members.



**Educate yourself
about the business
of publishing
wherever and
whenever possible.**

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- Q.** Is the IBPA a source for industry data (trend reports, etc.)?
- A.** Yes, and we are currently in the process of updating our white paper reports. Topics currently covered are distribution, marketing, salaries, the industry as a whole and more. We have plans to add reports on some of the latest trends including Web 2.0, social networking and more.
- Q.** What advice would you give to a new publisher entering the industry (other than to join IBPA!)?
- A.** Educate yourself about the business of publishing wherever and whenever possible. Also, I always tell publishers just starting out, in order to be successful, they need to treat publishing as a business—not just a hobby.
- Q.** Does IBPA have liaisons or contacts with larger (non-member) publishers?
- A.** Yes, IBPA is a recognized and respected name in the industry, and many of the larger publishers support what we are doing. We have a seat on the Book Industry Study Group, and we support many publishing-related causes like the Media Coalition. IBPA maintains good relations with many non-member publishers and we continue to improve our programs to meet the needs of not only the smaller members, but the larger ones as well.



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The Independent

DIRECTOR'S DESK

by Terry Nathan

Executive Director

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The Name Has Changed, but the Soul Remains the Same

In 1983, a group of 15 southern California publishers got together with the beginnings of a wonderful idea. None of them could afford to attend the annual convention of the American Booksellers Association, which was out of state that year, so they decided to pool their funds and send my mother, Jan Nathan. Off she went with all their books, and guess what? It worked!

She returned from the show excited about possibilities, and the Publishers Association of Southern California was born. The acronym PASCAL was quite hip in the early '80s. The group began with many local meetings and quickly saw that national marketing was one of the largest challenges each local publisher faced.

The concept of cooperative marketing became the backbone of the association, and shortly after my mom returned from the ABA show, the board of directors got to work on identifying useful marketing programs. PMA continued attending the major industry trade shows, including ABA, ALA, and Frankfurt, and also tested other shows, both inside and outside the book trade. In due course, direct mail programs to bookstores, libraries, and book reviewers proved successful, as did advertising in major trade journals such as *Publishers Weekly* and *Library Journal*.

Name Change #1

The group quickly gathered steam, and as it rolled out of southern California and across the country, the PASCAL board of directors found itself facing a challenge: changing the name of the group to better reflect what it was and what it did. After exhaustive exploration, PASCAL became the Publishers Marketing Association (PMA).

We continued to identify new programs and perfect the marketing programs being offered, and we quickly realized that educational opportunities were equally important, if not more important. Our monthly publication has been the most useful tool for educating the membership on a regular basis, and our annual Publishing University has been one of the most popular educational events anywhere in the industry. Today, as the Benjamin Franklin Awards celebrates its 20th anniversary, we offer one of the most respected awards programs in the book world.

Also, we've been passionate about defending and advocating for the rights of small and independent publishers. When distributors were unacceptably slow in paying, we weighed in with a collective voice. When we discovered a publisher repackaging our members' titles illegally, we had the practice stopped. We have opened doors at national distributors and wholesalers that otherwise would not have given our smaller members the time of day.

Over our years of doing business, we have become known as one of the most influential groups in the publishing industry. Today we work hand in hand with many influential people and groups in the book-publishing industry, with



**...we will continue
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level the playing
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a seat on the board of the Book Industry Study Group, and support for the efforts of the Media Coalition.

And Now . . .

Well, you know what has happened yet again. You got it. Our name no longer properly reflects our association's work—and impact—and, for the second time, we have faced the challenge of finding a name that better reflects what we are doing. Only this time, the decision is quite a bit harder.

A few years ago, we decided to change the name slightly, to PMA, the Independent Book Publishers Association. Now we are officially dropping "PMA." Soon we will be known as the Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA), which is a much better reflection of who we are and what we do.

You will have to forgive me for using "we" and "PMA" interchangeably throughout this column. But please understand, I grew up with PMA. This year I will be 45 years old, and for more than half my life I have been living, eating, and breathing PMA — first from afar, and then, starting 16 years ago this month, from within.

This name change has been a very painful process for me, but the more I think about it, the more it makes sense. I believe we are now holding back the potential of this wonderful group and, while I (understandably, I guess) have been resistant to this change, the time has come.

Regardless of what we are called, we will continue to work hard to level the playing field for small and independent book publishers. We will do that through low-cost marketing programs, educational opportunities, and advocacy, as well as by simply being a place to turn to when you have a question.

The industry has changed quite a bit since 1983, and so have we. I applaud the board of directors for changing our name, although the new one still feels awkward to me, and I have a feeling it will for a while. I feel as if I am saying goodbye to a lifelong friend who is moving away. But I know that, just as a friendship can continue after a move, PMA will always live inside IBPA as the heart and soul of this group.

To learn more about IBPA, visit their website at www.ibpa-online.org.