

Reinvent, Reimagine, Reinvigorate, Part II

The future – can we predict it? That was part of the theme in the spring ASPP Reinvention Weekend in Boston. Part I focused on the inspiration needed to produce quality work with the media rich assets available today. Sponsored by the American Society of Picture Professionals (aspp.com) and the Picture Archive Council of America (pacaoffice.org), the event offered top industry leaders as keynote speakers, allowing everyone to acquire new ways to run their businesses and new goals for success in this constantly changing digital world. Part II will address the future of content licensing as well as predicting the unpredictable.

Townsend Dickinson (Towny to his friends and associates) bravely introduced an open dialog between the text book publishers and the image creators to offer a safe and respectful environment for understanding each other's business demands. As an accomplished photographer, photo editor/researcher, and executive specializing in education oriented imagery, Towny recently worked for McGraw Hill Publishing. He claims to have gone to the "dark side" over the past 17 years in working for the publishing companies, and is an expert in understanding how photos will be used by educators.

With the introduction of non traditional stock sources such as Flickr, iStock and Google Images, can the professional still make a living in editorial imagery? Towny quotes, "Technological change is not additive; it's ecological. A new technology does not merely add something; it changes everything." (Neil Postman) The challenges are as diverse as the economy, Orphan Works, unauthorized uses, changing rights models and lower pricing models. "The effects are felt by everyone in the food chain."

The average editorial use in 1984 was \$160 for over a 40K print run. By the Consumer Price Index, that should be \$345 today. However, the amount has not changed much, showing that pricing has been eroding for years. Traditional forms of media are under assault. Books are now electronic and publishing companies are consolidating to strike deals for controlling costs. A major issue for picture producers is to know why the publishers need electronic rights for 10 years. Pearson Education offered that they typically sign a 7 or 8 year agreement with school districts and a 1 to 2 year option on either side of that. There is a digital component for the entire life of the program.

Houghton Mifflin offered that they are expected to keep their products the same for their customers. If their books run out of print because sales are better than expected, re-permissioning the image rights can be very difficult. People might have moved on or collections may have changed hands. Because of this, the picture agencies and photographers are expressing the importance of having a base pricing rate that is higher, so the publishers can continue to get real quality from reliable sources. Creative Commons licenses like Google images and Flickr are inadequate for most editorial book publishing products. The publishers won't rely on amateurs found on the internet, no matter how good their imagery appears to be. "An organized collection brings

professionalism. Sources that are reliable are efficient and quick. Peace of mind is of utmost importance.”

Issues are never resolved in these open forums, “but understanding comes through open dialogue, and we got off to a great start,” claims Towny. “The discussion needs to continue if we, as professionals, are going to be part of the next golden age of photography, that will see exponentially greater numbers of images being used for educational purposes on the internet than were ever used in printed books.”

Brian Storm is spellbinding with his multimedia productions. As Founder and Executive Producer of MediaStorm (www.mediastorm.org), he brings a rich selection of social documentary, incorporating photojournalism, interactivity, and animation, which reaches across multiple media. Brian says, “The goal of a photojournalist is to make a book. I’d like to change that. If a photojournalist gives you their book, they give you a piece of their soul.” A far greater audience is available on the web. The book is a piece of the franchise, but the reach can be extended.

Brian is a great promoter of professionalism as a differentiator from the crowd of amateurs. Introducing video is a very powerful tool. With multi media you can control an attention span and make characters come alive. The use of body language, visual sequencing and leading with sound help to create powerful stories. One of his most stunning stories is about the genocide in Ruanda in 1994, when the Tootsie women were raped repeatedly by the Hutu’s. 800,000 people were slaughtered in 100 days. We are reminded of a Stalin quote – “The death of a single person is a tragedy; the death of a million people is a statistic.” Brian states that it’s part of our job in journalism to get out of statistics, and put a face on humanity. “One of the great callings of journalism is to tell stories of others whom can’t tell their own stories.” Setting up foundations, winning grants, and working with NGO’s are all part of the tools to accomplish these goals.

Brian inspires us that we are living through a communication revolution. Their blog creates their RSS feed. Their newsletter is in steady growth. Their brand is connected to all the platforms they are using, and all the bloggers pick up their package for the blogosphere. He claims that, if you are not on uTube, you don’t matter. You must touch all social networking platforms, from Facebook to Twitter. “This is not the time in our industry to be down. It’s time to be up. People are starving for what we do.”

Rick Smolan is defined by his famous *Day in the Life* book series, as he is an amazing story teller and technology expert. A former Time, Life and Nat Geo photographer, he has captured the world with his production company – Against All Odds.

Most recently known for his very cool book, *The Obama Time Capsule*, he integrated the book with “publishing on demand,” offering each reader a unique feature. Each copy of the book integrates the reader’s photos into what becomes their personalized historical time capsule of the Obama Presidential story. The book generated more than 70 million media impressions including feature stories in the ABC Evening News, USA Today, CNN Situation Room, Entertainment Weekly, ABC News Now, and the MSNBC

Morning Program. Fortune Magazine described Rick's company as one of the 25 coolest companies in America. He is a master marketer.

Almost every book he has done has been the cover of a magazine, and he is best known for his ability to collaborate with hundreds of photographers to produce great works. The *AMERICA 24/7* book was opened to the public with their digital cameras to portray one week in America. The end product amounts to America telling America's story and was profiled by Barbara Walters, Ann Curry, Katie Couric, and Opra Winfrey.

He is credited for other well known books, such as *From Alice to Ocean*, *Passage to Vietnam*, and *24 Hours in Cyberspace*. Most of all he is a promoter of the modern forms of distribution that are at hand for every media producer right from their desk at home. "Until recently, if you weren't plugged into one of the major networks, you didn't get published. Now photographers can take control of how their pictures are used." Rick is another example of how quality and professionalism put him way above the crowd.

Dane Howard bills himself as a Designer, Father, Author and Entrepreneur. He has been a top player in all of those fields, moving among companies like BMW, Microsoft and eBay. He co-founded VUVOX, which creates dynamic visual galleries, interactive panoramas, and offers customization in a wide range of media presentation formats. That company was acquired by eBay in 2008. Devoted as a father, he created chloehoward.com, which launched his book, *The Future of Memories*.

Dane urges, "I share with all of you an aspiration to create significant works. We aspire to great works every day." He works to build teams and reinvents himself constantly. In the internet bubble of the '90's, he was inspired to innovate at the powerfully creative company called Quokka Sports. There they learned the principals of "Authenticity, Immediacy, and Intimacy, by working with the likes of the Olympics and Major League Baseball. One of the skills he took with him was to "set up systems to fail faster." He learned that the benefit of working quickly is that you resolve all the problems you will have to solve later. His mantra – "Push yourself and fail faster!"

Just a few of his best lessons – "Put your work on the wall and move it around." "Find someone that you respect and ask them to edit your work." "Stories build in strength with the retelling." "Collaborate with a programmer." "Shoot your next assignment with a microphone." "4D will be ready. Begin to think this way." "You will compete for people's time, not other photographers."

And, "Shoot quality – there is a lot of salt, sugar and fat in our photography today and we have to get healthy again."

Nancy Andrews flourishes in a changing environment. As Managing Editor for digital media at the Detroit Free Press, she has created an Emmy Award winning department, and produces a daily newscast aired on the local CBS station. As a photographer, she was known for her work at the Washington Post and as White House photographer of the year. She has also written two books.

She instructs us that, “We are in a time of *Destructive Innovation*.” New methods and technology change the field of play, and professional photographers face more competition than ever before. We can’t dismiss the consumer and their digital cameras with their definition of “quality.” “If you only do work of a certain type of quality, then you are missing a lot of quality work, and leaving room for destructive innovators to enter your field, and walk through your client’s door.”

In the Detroit area, life’s events are very personal. Everyone knows someone who has lost a job or a home. The local journalist has to stay passionate and be the best photographer or videographer. Be willing to do different things and give of yourself 110% of the time. They are especially proud of their work on the Michigan foster care system. Some of their best work, even on cell phone, can be seen on <http://freep.com/christchild>. Seven children were adopted as a direct result of the coverage.

Most importantly, know your audience and your customer. She says, “People are satisfied to see the same content across all platforms, so there is room and need for more content specific to TV, Web, phones and tablets.” New paper editions are down, but the total audience is expanding and they have a voracious appetite for information.

Jose Azel skillfully monitored the speakers and warns, “We now have a new manner in which to communicate.” He is co-founder of Aurora and Quanta Productions (auroraphoto.com), a stock photography company that merges traditional photography and digital media. He demonstrated a list of social media sites that runs for several pages. From this, he determines that the feedback loop has changed, and there is a whole new world for exchanging information. Because of that social media has paralyzed media collaboration, and we have to determine where we fit in.

As for his company, high quality is their hallmark. They remain true to editorial origins and the photojournalistic style, but have laid a foundation for commercial model released images. At Aurora, they embrace all the new venues and see them as opportunities. As Jose puts it, “Once the dust settles, I am sure we will have found new avenues for growth. In the area of multimedia we are already doing well with Aurora Novus.” Even though the business is becoming a more volume driven marketplace, their archive of imagery is the key to continued growth, “providing alternatives to our historically high-end and unique images for those clients who need a different level of licensing and price.”

Agents of global importance to the stock industry were participants in the audience. **Susan Jones** is Sales and Operations Manager for age fotostock America. Their agency caters to all markets, including publishing, advertising, and corporate/travel and retail products. Susan has seen many changes in the industry and says the programs on social media are especially important to them. They see prices going lower and time lines speeding up, allowing fewer photographers to make a living from stock alone. Their solution is to provide a wide variety of quality content to their clients, and to offer the best service along with flexible pricing. **Craig Sanderson** is Managing Director of

Image Source. He says that they don't feel pressure to change the way they do things, but they are more aware of the changes around them. They are differentiating themselves for the future with their Cross Media packets. Every still shoot they do includes a motion element to match. They produce all their own material and it always contains lifestyle and people. All the work is royalty free and they see growth in the regions of South America and the Asian market. According to Craig, "We believe there is a future in new media, and we have to do something different from everyone else." This event shows that the ASPP hit the nail on the head with a weekend event called The Reinvention Weekend, and the tag line being: **Reinvent, Reimagine and Reinvigorate**. That is a formula for all media creators going forward.

(Pat Hunt is a writer and workshop leader for the stock photo industry, and Managing Director of *Huntstock.com* in Boston, in partnership with Mark Hunt, Creative Director. Huntstock is a lifestyle image production company specializing in People with Disabilities, Hispanic Lifestyle, Industry/Technology and Boston Lifestyle. Mark has been featured in magazines for his iconic travel photography, and for the community being built around Positive Lifestyle with Disabilities. pat@huntstock.com.)