

BOOKSELLING THIS WEEK

Osnos Updates ABA on Plans for New Distribution Option

October 26, 2005 -- Peter Osnos, founder and editor-at-large of PublicAffairs, recently met with American Booksellers Association CEO Avin Mark Domnitz, COO Oren Teicher, and Special Projects Director David Walker to discuss Osnos' developing plans to fashion a new book publishing distribution option. Osnos had previously spoken of this project in September at Book Summit 2005, sponsored by *The Book Standard* and Nielsen BookScan, and, also, in an August interview with *Shelf Awareness*.

As outlined so far by Osnos, the operation will be based at the University of North Carolina Press and will include Yale University Press and several other not-for-profit publishers. As he explained at Book Summit 2005, it is a plan "for publishing serious nonfiction in ways that harness technology with the intention of attracting more readers, while reducing the corrosive waste and inefficiency that now characterize our business." Convinced that "there is a very strong audience for serious information and scholarship in America today," Osnos said at the summit that "the challenge is distribution."

With that in mind, Osnos' new model would involve up to five distribution options for consumers interested in purchasing a particular title either from a bookstore or a publisher, and the options would include printed copies, print-on-demand, audio, and digital editions. Discussing his plans at the Book Summit, Osnos said, "Contrary to the present model in which every link in the [distribution] chain seems intent on developing systems that benefit only themselves, and not the other links, we need a distribution system that is up-to-date in its technology and range, but still serves all the constituencies, from authors and agents, to editors and publishers, booksellers, libraries, and, ultimately, readers."

ABA's Domnitz characterized the meeting as "very productive," and said, "Peter Osnos has tackled a critical issue in publishing, and, clearly, he brings to the project a unique perspective and a proven record of industry accomplishment. ABA looks forward to continuing to work with him on his latest endeavor." --Dan Cullen