Inside Publishing with Aki Schilz

Thu, Oct 22, 2026 2:39PM 36:15

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Literary consultancy, Editing services, Writer mentoring, Publishing industry, Social change, Business consultancy, Ethical editing, Literary culture, Professional feedback, Author support, Editorial training, Career coaching, Industry advocacy, Mental health, Future trends

SPEAKERS

Aki Schilz, Megan Dawson

M Megan Dawson 00:02

Welcome to this episode of Inside Publishing, the series where we interview industry experts on everything publishing.

M Megan Dawson 00:12

Hi, I'm Megan, the podcast officer for SYP North. In this episode, I talk to Aki Schilz, director of the literary consultancy, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. We discuss the literary consultancy's role as a critical friend to writers and how it helps to make publishing more supportive. We'll also explore the pressures of working in the industry you love and what the future might hold for writers and editors. I hope you enjoy.

M Megan Dawson 00:38

Thank you very much for joining me today, Aki. So, if you don't mind, could you just give us an introduction to the literary consultancy, the kind of work that you do, and then maybe touch on your role there as well?

A Aki Schilz 00:50

Yeah, absolutely. My name is I am the director of the literary consultancy, and 2026 is our 30th anniversary. So, this is a really exciting year for us. And for the last three decades, we've been- we say we've been meeting writers on the page, offering editing services, mentoring events, and a community platform called Being a Writer, where we're focused on building happier, healthier habits for writers. That's what we're really interested in and invested in. We're also currently funded by the Arts Council, so we do a lot of social change work as well, supporting lower income and systemically marginalized writers. And my role is mainly programs and partnerships.

A Aki Schilz 01:31

I also work with publishers and agencies through our TLC for Business strand, which is where we support publishers with their editing services. So some of the big publishers outsource copy editing and proofreading to us. We also go in house and do training on ethical editing, which we can, I'm sure, talk about a little bit.

A Aki Schilz 01:50

And I've supported literary agencies and editorial service providers with some kind of business consultancy, publishing consultancy, and coaching as well. So lots and lots of things, and as I say, really exciting year for us this year.

M Megan Dawson 02:04

Fantastic! I think you did briefly touch on the kind of people who you might support, but I think it'd be really nice to just if you could dive into who it is that you work with, as in like what kind of authors you work with, but then also on the other side, like the editors and yeah, who who is it that you're in touch with?

A Aki Schilz 02:22

Yeah, so our team we've got a very small in-house team of three, but our editing team is about 90 editors. That doesn't mean every editor is in business all the time. We're not working with 1000s of writers every day. We are a small company. However, we have an international reach. About 25% of our audience is outside of the UK, but primarily UK-based authors, and really of all stages. So we've done a little bit of research into this. Probably around 80% of people we work with are working on a single project that they're looking to get finished, or they've already got finished. Most of them, maybe two thirds, have an ambition to commercially publish, but we are what we call platform agnostic, which means that we don't, we're not deliberately scouting only for the publishing industry. We think that all outcomes for writers are valid. So whether you're looking to self-publish, publish commercially with an indie, or whether you don't really know what you want other than an opinion on your work and your writing, we are, you know, hopefully a soft landing for you where you can get proper professional feedback. So all-comers is what my predecessor used to say, which I find quite an awkward turn of phrase. But but essentially, all all kinds of writers, all formats, all genres. We don't do academic writing because it's a very very particular discipline. But otherwise, anything from first drafts to also published writers. We have a small contingent of published authors who whom we're very privileged to work with, who send their stuff to us, either before they send it to their agent or after they've sent it to their agent and before it gets sent to publishers. So we're a useful kind of sense check, even for a much more advanced writer.

M Megan Dawson 04:01

Fantastic, and so that's 90 editors. That's I'm assuming that's built up over the last 30 years. Um, can you tell me a bit more about how the last 30 years have changed, and how the landscape has changed, and kind of yeah, what you've seen during your time and, um yeah, your career in the industry.

A Aki Schilz 04:19

Oh my gosh! What a big question! I haven't been going for 30 years, by the way. I've been in this job for 13 years. TLC predates not me as a person. I'm older than 30, but predates me being there at the beginning. But it was set up in this really interesting time in 1996, where you know the net book agreement had collapsed. The whole industry was shifting, and our founders Rebecca Swift and Hannah Griffiths, who were both working at Virago at the time, had identified that there was what they called a kind of toxic wasteland between authors and the industry. There was just this void where, at the time, now it feels impossible because there's so much information, there are so many editing services. But in 1996, there was nothing of the kind available. You know, the only place that someone could get real detailed feedback was if they'd already secured a book deal. And so our ethos has always been: you should get that kind. You can get that kind of attention as a paid service, which was also a bit taboo at the time. You know, charging for something. But we're here to advocate for editors as well, and you know their their value in this ecosystem. A lot of the stuff we do is advocating for the value of editing. So yes, we've grown, but It's not like it's also quite a saturated market. So it's quite interesting. I think what we've been really good at is keeping at the heart of what we do and the thing we believe in, which is that every writer deserves that close attention, and that close attention can be really transformative and pivotal because it might tell you you're you know you're a really small step away from being ready to go. Actually, all you need is a boost of confidence and validation, or it might say to you put the brakes on. There's quite considerable amount of work to do, but that's quite liberating. Knowing just knowing where you are, especially in an area where often you're working alone, you just have no sense of what your work, whether your work's working, whether your writing is appealing, and if so, whom it might appeal to, which publishers, which agents. You know, it all it's and it. Whilst it feels now like there's lots more information available and lots more options for writers, which I think is wonderful, and I really appreciate being part of an ecosystem. Very rarely are we the only place a writer has come who really makes it big. Not that you have to make it big, but I think we need a bit more acknowledgement that it's a collegiate effort. It's never there are success story. There's the proprietary success story. I think the best and most resilient writers are those who reach out to a number of places. But bigger changes. There are so many. There are so many. I mean, maybe we can isolate things to talk about. The one thing I'd say about a glut of information is it can sometimes feel like you ought to know everything as a writer, and actually, it's still very hard to sift and pass that information, and there are just so many, you know, hundreds of 1000s of titles being published a year with the biggest exporter of books. The UK is the biggest exporter of books in the world. It still feels probably just as overwhelming, and I think you know there's just less budget everywhere. Profit margins seem to be just as healthy, but it's strange. There seems to be less money to spend on authors, but that's a whole that's a whole other. That's another thing. Yeah, I just think there's a lot of pressure on authors, and maybe that's the same as 30 years ago. Maybe it's worse, better in some ways. There's a lot of shifting. There are a lot of spinning plates, as it were.

M Megan Dawson 07:40

Different pressures, and that means that there's different things to kind of get used to. I'd really like to dig into just rewind a moment where you said you try and provide real care, specialist care. How does TLC facilitate that when there's so many authors and so many editors? Like in terms of like a matchmaking process, how do you yeah facilitate that real care?

A Aki Schilz 08:03

Yeah, care is a really good word because actually a lot of the things we're doing right now. Um, so in November, I don't know when this is going out, but in November we are hosting a literary symposium, and part of that is looking at what literary culture is today, how it's defined by the people creating it, not just the people gatekeeping it, on the basis that if 1% of work ends up on bookshelves, there are 99% of writers unrepresented in our conversations about literature. So they're the people we are kind of advocating for. And one of the elements of the symposium will be bringing together these three sort of key pillars. One is climate, because, and I think these are these are really lots of these things are intersectional. One of these things is climate because we believe in being ethical and conscious about thinking about how we move through the planet and use its resources. And as author service providers and publishers, we need to be thinking about this. So climate's one. AI is another, although it won't be a big part of the symposium itself, but it's something we're thinking about very closely, and we've got a position on AI that's enshrined on our website. And the third piece is care, which is a bit hard to sort of materialize. But essentially, what we'll be doing is publishing a kind of manifesto of care that we hope others might also create. But for me, care is care sort of is two sides of one coin. On the one side, you've got the soft care skills. So that's, you know, do you have an employee assistance program? Are you providing mental health support? Do you have days off that don't count as annual leave? Are people able to take mental health days, compassionate leave, etc. with no notice? Those sorts of things, and you know, having a supportive environment where people are nice. On the other side, and I think this is the side that sometimes gets gets missed. Is you need to have processes in place, protocols in place. Care is I go to a publisher and I know how I will be edited. Care is I go into an imprint and I know the values that imprint holds, so that I know whether mine are aligned or not. Care is the fees are transparent from. Time you meet the landing page of the service provider's website. Care is, I've got T's and C's, and I know what's included and what's not included. Rather than everything might be included, just ask. Care is not just come to me if you need something, but here are the ways that you can come to me in clearly outlined steps, so no one feels like they're having to use their own impetus. Care is a really, really big part, and and some some of that is the other things that you mentioned. Hand matching, you know, yes, we've got 90 editors because every manuscript needs is for us is important to match it to the right editor, and we do all of the liaison, all of the thinking about it. We have resources for before and after you've had a service with us, it's wrap around, but it's but it is fairly off the shelf, so you know what you're getting, and I think that's part. That's a really important part of care as well.

M Megan Dawson 10:52

Yeah, because it's easy to forget that these are people's like hopes and dreams and aspirations. So yeah, when you're dealing with those things, care should be at the center of all of these decisions and processes and conversations, and it sounds like you're kind of really leading the way in that. Is that an industry standard, or do you think that's something that TLC really thrives in that maybe we don't see elsewhere?

A Aki Schilz 11:17

Well, I think we've always led from this position from the beginning. What's interesting is I think I am seeing a bit of an evolution in other service providers. Some of them from the beginning have had that same message. We're not the only ones, but there definitely was. I have to say there has been a shift away from. I think it's been consumer led, client led, writer led, human led. You know, some service providers have often started from the position of, like, come to us, you'll get a book deal. You're one step closer to being published. You're one step closer to an agent. And I think people are realizing that that is a disingenuous offer. And I have to say, we've never, never advertised that way. And I always feel slightly cynical about any offer that starts there. And I think it's difficult because you know, come get published with us versus come be taken seriously with us. One sounds a bit more glamorous and immediate, so I don't think it's we're the only ones at all. But I do think we've always held firm on that, and that's also a bit of a guiding light for us in terms of what we will and won't offer. So some of the things that there's been huge demand for certain services that we're just never going to create because they don't align with where we sit. What would be an example? God, I knew you're going to ask me, and I thought, oh God, I better shut my mouth. I I I can be specific, and this is absolutely not to you know. Some people find these useful, but for me, if you're paying substantial amounts of money for very short contact with an agent whose job it is to look for people, I just feel like they can't. I don't know. Paying for proximity to the industry makes me a bit anxious about the ethical implications. Frankly, you know. I mean, we offer one to ones, but they're an hour of considered time. We're not, you know, pay us for 10 minutes of somebody looking very briefly and perfunctorily at your work. I just, I just think, you know, think about the service that is best for you as at this moment in time as a writer, and think really carefully about what your investment is going towards the credentials behind it, but also whether this serves you and how this serves you, and if what you actually need is I need to be closer to people, then maybe an event is a better way to go than trying to pay for you know, especially if it's not the agent who might be right for you. And I just think having having some agency in this process is important for writers. Writers need to should feel empowered to make these decisions and not feel like they are. You know, we're in service to you. You're not in service to us as an industry. You're the talent. So I think sometimes that power dynamic makes things, services, offers, etc. just tricky.

M Megan Dawson 13:59

I think that everything that you've just said kind of exemplifies TLC's position as a critical friend rather than a gatekeeper, because yeah, it's usually the gatekeepers who would authorize that proximity, and yeah, as a critical friend, I really quite like that description. So where does yeah, where did that idea come from?

A Aki Schilz 14:18

Yeah, this is part of our reading principles, actually, I'm really glad that you've kind of been attuned to that. That's really nice. So, our reading principles are basically a guiding set of principles that we're going to publish. They've never been open source because we use them for internal training. So, all of the editors that come to us, we have reading guidelines and principles that they adhere to when they're reading our clients' work. We're about to update them. Obviously, in light of AI, there are all sorts of other things cropping up now very quickly that we need to revisit. But in essence, the principles have remained pretty much the same, and readers get kind of guidance and training, periodic training in this. But critical friend, I also think one thing to to note is that we still are a gatekeeper. And we can't just disavow our gatekeeperiness simply because we also offer a critical friendship. You know, we are a commercial company. The stuff that we do, whilst social change is at its heart, is a commercial service. It's we work under capitalism, and I also think that you can do good and make money at the same time. Because to do good, you need to believe that people's work is valuable, and I believe that our editors' work is valuable. Therefore, I want to pay them. But but critical friend from the from the reading principles, all that means is that you are you are in a in a kind of slightly more equal relationship with the writers. So you're just you're matching their energy rather than preaching from on high. So you're reading it through the lens of industry experience, genre experience. That's why the hand matching is really important. If you've written crime, you'll get a crime editor. If you've written romance, you'll get a romance editor. If you want to be self published, you'll get a reader who's had experience of that. So critical friend just means I will apply a critical lens, but it's supportive. And friend is a bit of a misnomer because obviously we're not the editors aren't friends of the writers. It would be foolish to believe that that's the kind of relationship that's possible. Because I think you do need a proper objective distance to be able to be honest with someone. This is why real life friends are not always the solution. I think we've got so many different agendas in between our interpersonal relationships that can get in the way of being honest with our feedback. You need the right readers, and I think real life friends are brilliant for being supportive. And you need allies, you need champions, and you need critics. And for a writer, it's just about kind of identifying where you get those different bits. And not everyone can afford a a professional read with TLC or with a competitor with with whoever, but I believe in the value value of what we do, and that kind of critical approach is what we can offer really well.

M Megan Dawson 16:52

Just maybe for a bit more context. So obviously, as you say, there's it's not realistic that you're going to have this yeah relationship with an editor that looks like a friendship, but can you just tell me what that connection and communication looks like? Is it kind of, I suppose maybe it depends on the author and what they're presenting, but is it just like a? Do you usually offer just a one-off read and then they come back with feedback, or is it more a bit of a to and fro? Like, what would the actual process look like? I assume it varies, but maybe one or two examples from different ends of the scale.

A Aki Schilz 17:30

Yeah, great question, and actually intersects really nicely with my other work as a so as as part of my work with TLC. I'm a tutor with the Chartered Institute for Editors and Proofreaders, so I train up editors in their practice, and we do. I'm their introduction to fiction developmental editing tutor, and I also work with writers and artists, with whom we partner on Edit Academy, which is for much more beginner level writers. My CIEP work is for beginner but established professional editors. But but why that's relevant is that sometimes this question comes up when we're training up editors, like, what should my relationship be? I think if you're a sole trader, if you're a freelance editor working out, striking out on your own, your relationship with clients is going to look very different to a relationship with a client that we you'd have through a consultancy model like TLC. Part of the consultancy model that we operate on is based on us doing all of the author liaison, so all of our editors are not for for the basic services for the editing services are not in touch with the writers because it's not it's a boundary thing. It is not a you know we'll just have a call here and there or do whatever. You can do that if you're a sole trader. Although my advice is have your own boundaries and be really careful how you liaise with your clients and manage your time and energy, but with TLC, what the editors are also getting is they're under our professional identity assurance, they're under our T's and C's. The author care is taken care of by TLC, so we are our team is there to look after the clients, and then the editors perform the service, deliver the service, we quality check it and then pass it back. In order to hold that, because that can feel a bit impersonal, I mean, what you're getting is objective feedback. You're getting a resource. You're getting hand held through it by us, matched to my editor by us, told what the service is. You get a what to expect document. Then you have your waiting time. Then you have the service, and then you have a next steps document, and and then you have the option of having an additional workshop with us, which is how to implement the feedback, because we found that some clients struggle in that post period. Alternatively, you can just have a call with your editor, and you can bolt it onto the service at the point of booking, so service plus call, or you can choose not to do it, or you can have several calls, but they are delineated one-hour calls where you get a set number of words to send. There's a goal-setting worksheet you can really focus your time rather than just having an hour's open chat. That won't work for every editor, and it won't work for every writer. But as a model we've been operating for 30 years, it works really well for mentoring. Different. So mentoring, we have a one to one year to 18 month program that you are directly in touch with someone. We then say this is how many sessions, this is how much time, this is how many words. So that is clearly delineated within a contract to make sure that everyone's time is respected. But you are directly in touch with your mentor, and that's much more intensive.

M Megan Dawson 20:21

Okay, that sounds like you're really open to a lot of people's different styles, and it takes away some of those maybe the the in between the admin that requires that takes up time and things that people need to navigate. So as you act as the go between, it means that maybe there's less of those difficult conversations, and people are in less difficult positions with yeah respecting their time and boundaries. I'd like to go back if we can because you briefly mentioned about the tutorship and why you think yeah teaching editorial skills is so important and what that looks like. I think that might be particularly relevant to this audience who maybe would like to, what kind of yeah tutorship that you offer in terms of editorial skills?

A Aki Schilz 21:06

Absolutely, the basis of this is that for many years since 2018, we've been offering some kind of editing training. It hasn't always been a part of our work at TLC. It's a fairly new thing. It started with a partnership with the Publishing Training Center, now the Institute of Publishing, and we were training up aspiring editors from marginalized backgrounds. What we realized was that of the applications that came in for that scheme, the first time we ran it, I think the first couple of weeks we had 100 applications come in. What surprised us was that 30% of those were from people who'd already been working in publishing, often at assistant level, not you know, not anything higher than that. We had no idea that people already working in jobs in publishing, often in editorial, some some in marketing who wanted to switch over, but but primarily in editorial, felt like they needed a very introductory level skills training in editing, which is what we were offering. It wasn't, you know, it was very, very beginner level, and still is. So that made us think. Hang on, there's there's a there's a gap here, and I know that several publishers now are making moves to bring editing training in house, which I think is marvelous and wonderful. You know, we'd still we would still do it. We would still love to be called in to do it. But if that became a thing that was institutionalized, I think that's brilliant because editing is a skill you can learn. I think in house, and I've worked in house with several big publishers now. What struck me was that sometimes us bringing editors into a room is the first time they were in a space properly together or talking about editing as a practice. Often you learn by shadowing, which is fine, but actually it's a teachable skill, and part of that is making it more accessible and inclusive. Because if it's something that you imagine only some people are good at, and I know that still some people believe this, I really rally against this idea because it's it's exclusionary. It means that only people with certain confidences or privileges, are able to access it, and actually anyone can be trained in how to edit well if you've got the interest and the passion and you're committed. So on that basis, we set up Edit Academy with the Writers and Artists Yearbook, and Edit Academy runs twice a year. So we've just done our last cohort in October. We've got another one coming up in spring, no date as yet. That's a small cohort of in-person training at Bloomsbury. For if you're considering it, like, are you thinking about it? Because it might be that you've not made up your mind yet, and we don't mind if you come to a day's in-house training with us, and at the end of it, you think, "Oh God, I think my my skills are better suited elsewhere." Because overwhelmingly, we find that people who are job seekers in publishing think they want to work in editorial, but don't necessarily know what that involves. So, Edit Academy is a very like open door. Come if you think it might be for you, and if you end up not feeling like it's for you, that's fine because maybe something's better suited. That's great. That's still a good outcome. For the CIEP course, that is for people who are have decided editing is for them, and they want to either add fiction editing to their suite of services, fiction developmental editing, I should say, or maybe they're switching over. I get a lot of alumni from that course, which runs three or four times a year, who are you know have been in medical editing or or something else, but yeah, it's it's a trainable skill, and I really really believe that, and I think that's something we push quite hard because it means anyone can do it, but you need to be committed to to do it well and mindfully.

M Megan Dawson 24:34

I think a lot of that resonates, particularly the idea of I think a lot of people coming to publishing editorial is kind of sat on this pedestal almost, as in this is kind of the most booky part of if you're going to work in publishing. Yeah, you're you're reading and you're really immersed in it, and so I can see why a lot of people would maybe look at that, but then need a little bit of time to really understand like what is being an editor and what does that role. Involve. Would you say that that is a role that is is being an editor now different to how it was 30 years ago? Is it likely to change in the future? Like when you're looking at teaching editorial skills, what are kind of the most important things, and how is that changing?

A Aki Schilz 25:18

Yeah, I think it depends what level you are. If you're in house at a bigger publisher. Obviously, smaller publishers have their own their own processes. But if you're in, I do think. I mean, it's changed. The obvious ways in which it's changed is that you know editors used to have secretaries and assistants, and and now I think also people don't realize that the reading books part of the job it's often outside of work hours. It's not within work hours, and the actual editing. You know, I've recently. I'm a business coach, and I occasionally coach individuals. Mainly, it's small businesses in the publishing and book space. Sometimes it's individuals. And one of my last coaches was someone who, you know, has been a publishing director, has been an associate publisher, has held quite high positions. But for years now, they said to me, they've not really touched a book. They've been in charge of other parts of the process. You know, a lot of it is spreadsheets and PNLS, and so I think it depends on what kind of position you're in. I think, and and maybe at the from what I've heard, and I don't work in house. At the assistant level and at the top level is where there's less actual books. Somewhere in the middle you get there, but assistant level certainly a lot of admin. And I think if you're thinking about kind of job seeking skills, I mean, I don't mean to tar everyone with the same brush, but I've certainly encountered a lot of higher level people who maybe maybe don't have the good admin digital skills that some of the younger people coming into the industry have so yeah, your basic admin skills are actually assets. They're real, real assets, rather than just a love for books. And I think you know I've also looked at 1000s of job applications for various roles over my time in the industry, and I think there's a lot of I love books. I have a passion for books. Great, that's implied. That's why you're applying. But what are the like? How do you balance your your love for the industry with skills, real skills and competencies? So like bringing those forward is important. I think that makes sense. I think it's hard because it's not. You have to be constantly reading. That's one thing that everybody that I've spoken to is like it's kind of a given. It's a given that you love books, but it's kind of as you say beyond just loving books. It's kind of a whole world. Is that kind of the case, or as you say, it depends on what level you're at? Well, this is an interesting question because it also feeds into something that I think about personally a lot. So this is not a TLC position at all. This is definitely a me thing, and I don't mind being candid about this. A few years ago, I experienced what I'm pretty sure was undiagnosed clinical burnout. One of the things is I think if the expectation is you should be reading all the time, you should be whatever. One of the problems in this in this industry, not created by the industry necessarily, but just this alchemical thing that happens around who's applying and who's working in it is that the thing we love becomes our job, and the problem is it's very hard to then have boundaries between what is a job and what is stuff we do outside of our job. If it all feels like it's feeding into the job, it becomes fodder, and fodder is not very joyful; it's mechanical. And actually, what that experience, I was in just not well at all. And I'd also experienced, you know, grief in my personal life, and other things had gone on. So I took three months off, and I was lucky that TLC supported me in that. And it probably wasn't enough time, frankly. But one of the big things I was really exploring, and that comes up in my coaching as well a lot, is not so much how to have harder divisions between your life and your work, because I think sometimes that doesn't; those divisions are pretty porous in our industry and are going to be there. But you've got to find stuff outside of what is just work that feeds you.

A Aki Schilz 28:59

And it was interesting because I talked to someone recently who said, "Oh, but the thing that I love and the thing that I work for-they're inextricably linked. There is no, there is no. It's all flow. It's all energetic flow, and I feel very buoyed by that." And I thought that's fine if that gives you energy. But for me, I was finding that it was draining my energy, and so I think I struggled with I need to have a boundary. And what actually I realized was I just need to find joy elsewhere as well, because a lot of what I do outside of work feeds my work, and it makes me feel purposeful, and that's great. But retaining stuff that isn't, you know, your job being your identity is frankly a recipe for psychological disaster in the long run, and it's not, it's not the be all and end all. It's really not. It can be informed by who you are, but it is not the sum of who you are. So that's a bit of a tangent. But I just think it's important, especially when people are coming into the industry at the level you know that your community at SYP, which by the way is wonderful and I've supported for many many years, is useful to think about because I also. When I used to do more career coaching, which I do less of now, I have coached quite a few mid-career people who have found that they're just doing stuff that they because they were always good at it, and there was kind of nothing else outside of that. So I just yeah, do it for the love, but it's not just for the love.

M Megan Dawson 30:19

I think especially with the SYP community, a lot of people find that you'll work for years doing something adjacent to publishing, and then you'll get your break, and you may be doing something like this and volunteering, and you start off with like an assistant level, and still feels like it's been such a slog on to get there. That you probably feel like there is that pressure to. Well, I'm here now. I have to kind of put everything into this. This is what I wanted. So, if I'm not committing everything, then yeah, how can how can I do it? So it's definitely they call it a work life balance for for a reason. And different people have different capacities, I assume, for for taking that on. But yeah, thank thank you very much for sharing that so honestly. We can move on to something a little bit more uplifting now if you want to think about the future of TLC. Looking forward, maybe not the next 30 years, but it could parallel the last 30 years and the next 30 years, or even the near future. Um, what you think the the greatest opportunities are, and what what you're most excited about?

A Aki Schilz 31:00

Yeah. Well, do you know what I mean? Not the the next 30 years, but actually, in a way, the next 30 years are worth having a horizon scan on for any business. And actually, it was another a coach friend, or maybe she was a consultant. I I forget now. I'm sorry, you know who you are, but somebody who who I have worked with, who works with big organizations, like much bigger than I've ever worked with, massive organizations. She does 1000 year business plan, and actually, I've I've only I've seen it in the wild for the first time last week. I got a Christmas party invitation for a consultancy that I work with and have worked with for a really long time, and they I think they're either presenting or they mentioned their 1000 year business plan. I was like, oh my god, it happens! It's a real thing. Not that not that my friend made it up, but I was like, what do you mean? What does that mean? But so I like I love scanning ahead because I think it also brings up big questions, doesn't it? Like, instead of looking at the next five years, why don't we look at the next 50? I just think it gives you, it opens up that the view, and I find that really exciting. I think a lot's unknown. I I also think you know there are lots of anxieties around AI and the creative industries, as you know, and as everyone listening will know there've been a lot of huge, difficult conversations about that. I think if we just hold true to our values, that there will always be writers, there will always be storytellers, there will always be people who believe that their work and their stories are important. And if there are people like us, and we're definitely not the only ones, and lots of our peers in this industry, showing them that their work is valuable, helps supporting them, being part of this ecology, also advocating. So I think when we when we horizon scan as a company, we've always done a lot of advocacy, but I'd like to make some of that much more public, because I actually think more and more we have responsibilities outside of our commercial service provision, by which I mean actually standing up for writers' rights, which we always have done, but I would like to make much more visible, especially when things are happening that are eroding those rights quite rapidly. Because if we, we, you know, we rely on writers for business, we rely on the publishing industry for our business, but if we're not saying, hey, hang on, there are these challenges going on. How are we navigating them? Here's a space where you can talk about them. Here are the resources. Here are the people who who know this stuff. Because because we're not thought leaders in all areas. There are loads of places that are not our areas of expertise, but we can point writers in the right direction. Basically, how can we empower writers to understand what's going on in a much clearer way? I think we do have that responsibility. We have, as I mentioned before, an ethical responsibility because we are living in a burning world. There is writers and writing are a product of the world and also feed their stuff into the world. It is a it's an osmotic process. It is not a silo of you observe the world through a window and you write about it. I think we are more and more having to write directly into the world in a much more visceral way, and that's our responsibility as well to respond to that, to be attuned to that, to be attentive to it. So I think much more advocacy is going to be coming in the future.

A Aki Schilz 34:37

And then on the commercial side, I think you know I I would really love to expand our business provision, our kind of publishing consultancy. I love providing editing services to publishers, but I'd love to find other ways that we can work with publishers. Thinking about, you know, what editing means, how to support writers. We've got 30 years of looking after writers under our belt. I think we've got some really valuable learnings. And then really exciting partnerships. You know, we've got a couple that we're that are we're squireling away and secretly working on. I'd love to, and we've always had a really great habit of forming really strong partnerships and collaborations because you know we're not all competing. We are sharing audiences, and I think the more we can collaborate collaborate equitably, the better for the industry.

M Megan Dawson 35:24

That sounds like I really like that multifaceted approach as well, because as you say, open it up for the next 50 years that allows you to look at it from lots of completely different angles. So, thank you for providing such a broad answer there. I think, unless there's anything else you'd like to add, I think that's a really nice way for us to end.

A Aki Schilz 35:45

Beautiful.

M Megan Dawson 35:46

Lovely. Thank you so much, Aki

A Aki Schilz 35:48

Thank you so much, Megan. I've really enjoyed it.

M Megan Dawson 35:51

Thank you for listening to Inside Publishing. I've been your host, Megan. If you enjoyed this episode, please rate and review us on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you listen to your podcast, as it really helps us to reach more people. Do feel free to let us know your thoughts on social media or send suggestions our way by emailing podcast.syp@gmail.com. See you next time.