

From content to market: Transforming great stories into great business ideas

THE inextricable link between copyright and business opportunities, and perhaps to a certain extent livelihood, cannot be denied.

An acclaimed publisher Jason Epstein, at the 2011 WIPO High Level Dialogue on the Book and Publishing Industry, made it clear that copyright is the link between stories and business, going on further to claim that "copyright is the sine qua non of their [writers] survival".

He even continues to make a moral argument for copyright, in that without supporting the livelihood of writers, the future of our civilisation would be at risk, explaining that, "Our civilisation has been enriched, preserved, interpreted and handed down to us mainly by writers... without it, writers cannot afford to write, and how then shall we learn who we are?"

Artistic, intellectual works protected
In Brunei Darussalam, the Copyright Order 1999 provides that any literary and artistic works of creators is automatically protected for the life of the author plus 50 years.

This applies to all works with the exception of typographical arrangements of published editions, in which case the protection will be for the life of the author plus 25 years.

This protection prevents others from copying the tangible form of the author's works without prior consent of the author. In other words, the creator or author has the exclusive commercial right of exploiting his own work.

This is where a great story could be transformed into a great business idea. Copyright not only allows writers to survive, but even perhaps, thrive in business.

Stumbling blocks for local writers
So where exactly are Brunei Darussalam and its writers on this story-business drive highway?

Brunei Darussalam's writers face challenges mostly in terms of tapping the

market. There are many reasons for this, but the most common is the lack of experience publishers have in helping commercialise stories, lack of statistical data in order to understand the market, and perhaps most significantly, the small market in Brunei, which is further exacerbated by low readership levels amongst the Bruneian population.

The latter problem has become more acute amongst the younger generation with competition from electronic gadgets such as tablet computers and computer-generated games.

There are opportunities to market stories abroad; however, similar problems arise.

There is even more competition from foreign writers who have established reputations and a larger share of the global book market.

Nevertheless, these challenges can be overcome by opportunities presented in this digital age.

There are greater opportunities to tap the market as digitisation and digital connectivity reduces the cost of producing and marketing writers' content. There may not be a need for publishers with the available resources available online.

In this digital era, anyone, anywhere, can be a published writer, and anyone can become a publisher.

There are ways to promote books online - for example, Amazon's KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing) Select allows you to maximise your book's sales potential and reach out to a larger market by making your books available on Kindle.

There are also email promotions or paid e-book promotions through book promotion sites that list discount deals, and send out daily emails to their subscribers, i.e. BookGorilla, FussyLibrarian, BargainBooksy, Booksends, Ereader News Today, and several others.

Paid online advertising on all the major

online services offer paid advertising, for example Facebook/Instagram ads, Google ads, Amazon ads, Twitter ads, and more. Social media is also very useful in further promoting books and reaching out to more readers.

Digital technology a double-edged sword

However, with the great opportunities that technology brings also come challenges.

As books are readily available online, writers and authors should be aware that their works can also be easily and just as quickly downloaded and copied without their permission.

Most Internet users innocently download such works on the internet and virally disseminate these works through social media, causing loss of profits to the authors.

Fortunately, there are ways to protect copyrights online with Digital Rights Management (DRM). DRM includes Technological Protection Measures (TPM) such as encryption, scrambling, and password protection or access control.

Other components of DRM include Rights Management Information (RMI) such as watermarking.

Despite challenges faced in the domestic market and the international digital market, there is still room for the story-business drive to grow in Brunei.

Firstly, more awareness is needed amongst Bruneian youth especially on the importance of books in informing culture and history, as well as stretching the boundaries of children's creativity and imagination through stories.

In essence, there is not just a need to increase awareness on reading, but also to make it popular and more attractive.

Knowledge on authors' rights, copyright protection lacking

Aside from increasing readership in Brunei and tapping the market, another

major problem in Brunei is the lack of knowledge on copyright protection.

Most writers do not know how to protect their works or what rights they have over their works.

There are many instances where writers unwittingly sign away their rights to their works through contracts due to illegal advice - or lack of it - for a lump sum financial concession.

There needs to be more awareness on authors' rights, and the need to ingrain in our writers that stories can be transformed into business opportunities.

Readers also need to know that works available on the Internet are copyright-protected and they should not disseminate copies of these works without permission.

AGC copyright seminar

In conjunction with World Intellectual Property Day which is celebrated every April 26, the Attorney General's Chambers (AGC) held a one-day seminar on copyright themed 'Tapping on the New Techs and App: Opportunities and Challenges' on May 12, 2018.

Participants from local universities, government departments as well as copyright users attended the event, listening to talks from representatives from the World Intellectual Property Organization, the AGC, the Royal Brunei Police Force (RBPF), the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, as well as a number of local creative artists.

The seminar was organised in recognition of the important role that intellectual property rights (patents, trademarks, industrial designs, copyright) play in encouraging innovation and creativity.

For this year, the AGC wishes to highlight the effect of the emergence of the digital era and how it impacts on the brilliance and ingenuity of our local creators as well as how it has impacted them and the public in general - *Attorney General's Chambers*