

Small Press Development, the summer equivalent to Intro to Publishing, was my first class in the PSU publishing program. The first thing that Dennis Stovall had us do in the class was write a brief description of ourselves, explaining why we were interested in publishing. Looking over this description and the rest of the works in this portfolio, it's clear to me that my time at PSU allowed me to explore topics of interest to me. My time in the program has deepened my knowledge of the issues involved in the future of publishing and given me many new ideas of the possibilities publishers face today.

Like, I suspect, most people who chose to enter a graduate program in publishing, I've always enjoyed both reading and writing. I began writing at about age ten, and for years entertained the idea of making a living writing books. I went so far as to decide to take a year off from work to try out writing, and joined an online critique group to encourage me to write more and to get some valuable feedback from others.

In the course of writing stories for critiquing and critiquing the stories of others, I realized that not only was I good at helping people work out problems in their stories, I enjoyed it. Once I made that realization, it seemed the obvious thing to do for me to try to help people work on their manuscripts. Through a friend, I got involved in copy editing. While I enjoyed that and was good enough at it, I didn't have the unflagging attention to minutiae that a really good copy editor needs, so it made sense for me to further explore the process of bringing a book into the world.

A love of gadgets and a fascination with computers conspired to interest me in the electronic side of publishing. I think that electronic distribution of texts is going to happen to books as surely as it has happened to music, and publishers will have many of the same problems the RIAA and the MPAA have had in recent years. Meanwhile, authors will have many of the same opportunities of exposure that countless bands and WebTV programs have had. How the publishing industry is going to survive and thrive in the coming decades is a real question, and one that I'd like to have a go at answering.

I see many new opportunities for publishers in the future as well, as definitions of what a publisher are change. Standard text files are the merest surface of what a publisher might be expected to publish in the future; hypertext fiction, in which individual chapters, sections, or paragraphs are linked to each other not in one set order but rather by a web of interconnecting hyperlinks, is one basic example of where textual stories could go. From there, it is easy enough to imagine stories that, like websites, will store information about what you've already seen and alter content accordingly. At a certain point along this spectrum, stories begin to turn more into games like the old InfoCom text adventures such as *Zork*. Are these still stories publishers will be selling? What about community-driven stories, modifiable by anyone with access, like a wiki? All of these are things that publishing will be confronting in the next ten or twenty years, if not sooner, and I'm excited and curious to see how it turns out.