
Manila Women's Forum

A Network of Women Professionals

September 2004

A Glimpse of the Philippine Publishing Industry

By Judith Roa-Yu

On the drizzly early evening of August 16, we were warmly welcomed to the open front door of Linda Panlilio's home, ushered by flickering candles in capiz holders lined up along the wooden path of the entrance. There was a book display set up on a long table in the foyer which was surrounded with framed works of art hung on all four walls. These creations were in bronze, oils, acrylic and watercolor created by Philippine national artists – and also by our host! Our guest speaker for this monthly meeting was Karina A. Bolasco, who is the Assistant General Manager & Publishing Manager for Anvil Publishing, which was the reason for the book exhibit. Several of the books were written or edited by our humble host Linda.

Linda held a 9-page curriculum vitae as her reference in introducing our guest speaker. She gave an impressive overview of Karina's 24-year career as a writer, editor and publisher. What caught our attention was when Linda said Karina won 7 book awards from the Manila Critics Circle this year, in addition to the 82 National Book awards already received throughout her 14-year career in publishing.

Karina began her talk with a statement, "there is no formal training available on publishing in the Philippines." She discussed the climb to her current position from her first job in 1976 as a staff writer for the Ministry of Labor fresh out of college, when she and some boys from Ateneo thought they could influence government policy from "the inside."



Karina Africa Bolasco

"There is no formal training available on publishing in the Philippines," says Karina, Assistant General Manager and Publishing Manager of Anvil Publishing, Inc.

She went on to teach as an English Literature Professor at St. Scholastica's College, where she graduated, as well as at Ateneo de Manila University from 1976 to 1982.

In 1979, Karina accepted the Senior Editor position for National Bookstore, Inc. and continued to teach. In accordance with Martial Law, the government decreed what American publishers referred to as a

"legal piracy" law. Therefore, NBS was more involved in reprinting than publishing books. Contrary to her title, her work did not entail much editorial work. When books were selected for distribution in the Philippine market—whether local or imported—they were simply copied en masse. Karina described this process as "shoot & print," and then the books were distributed for sale in the stores. In order to avoid international piracy violations, the Philippine government came up with a system whereby the peso price was indicated on each copy and labeled "No Export Allowed." During this period, National Bookstore specialized in textbook reprints and the whole industry was mainly made up of textbook publishers. The "legal piracy" decree took quite a while to be abolished even after Martial Law.

(Continued on p. 4)

Next MWF Meeting

When: 6:30 p.m., Monday
September 20, 2004

What: Ann Quon, Director of ADB's Office of External Relations and former CNN anchor, will speak on "Moving Your Career Forward: Insights from both Journalism and the ADB"

Where: Lynette Mallery's home, 7 Cattleya, Valle Verde II, Pasig

Bring: A contribution to the potluck dinner.

October meeting: 6:30 p.m.,
Monday October 18, 2004

More on Karina and Anvil

Karina, also a children's author

With all that Karina has done in the last twenty-five years, a 9-page curriculum vitae is indeed barely enough just to enumerate her accomplishments related to publishing. Not too many people know, however, that Karina is also a children's author herself, having written and published many children's verses, stories, and books.

Before Anvil, Karina was Publishing Manager for the Elementary-High School Book Division of National Bookstore, Inc. It was while in National that she wrote and published two children's books - Illustrated Children's Dictionary, in collaboration with well known illustrator, sculptor and painter Ben-Hur Villanueva, and Animal Alphabet Stories in Pictures which consisted of twenty six books with illustrator Joel Yau.

Now, aside from her many other professional affiliations directly related to her job as a publisher, Karina Bolasco is also a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI), a 30-year old international organization based in Los Angeles, California.

Anvil Publishing and children's books

The latest about Anvil Publishing is that are looking forward to more children's books from them, especially after they launched their Lola Basyang series last August at the 2004 Manila International Book Fair. In order to know Anvil better, we visted their new

offices in Pasig City, just a few minutes from Edsa and Shangri-la Mall on Shaw Boulevard.

Any aspiring author, illustrator or book designer who gets a chance to meet with Publishing Manager Karina Bolasco and Marketing Manager Gwenn Galvez will quickly realize that the fate of any Anvil book-in-the-making is in their hands. Between the two of them, most of the hard-nosed business and editorial decisions are pretty much covered - what your book will be like, how it will be marketed, what the initial print run should be, how many reprints can be expected, what is its "life", how long it is expected to "live", and whatever else you might care, or are brave enough, to thresh out. As Karina famously says, ask and you will be answered.

A chat with Managing Editor Ani Habulan is also a great help. So is closely studying the Anvil walls. Presenting a visual history of the company through the years, the walls are like a gallery, showcasing the covers of many, many Anvil books. Next to browsing through a library or a bookstore, it's the best way to know the kinds of books that Anvil publishes.

Over the years, Anvil has published more than 5,000 titles, eighty two of which have won National Book Awards in different categories. Karina herself has been cited six times as Publisher of the Year by the Manila Critics Circle - in 1990, 1991, 1995, 1998, 1999, and 2000.

An item of special interest is a framed front page of the Sunday Inquirer Magazine, dated November 24, 1991.

It shows Karina

with Bookmark's Lory Tan, billed as "The New Publishers" thirteen years ago. The book covers on the walls alone, not counting the plaques for various publishing awards, show that Karina and Anvil have come a long, long way since then.

Upon leaving, be sure to glance farther towards the back of the building when you step out the door. There you will see Anvil's warehouse. It is full of books. Who knows, one day your book might also be there, ready to be shipped to stores and readers everywhere.

Anvil Publishing is at 8007 Pioneer Street, Bo. Kapitolyo, Pasig City 1600 Philippines, Tel. (632) 637-3621 and (632) 637-5692, E-mail pubdept@anvil.com.ph

Text and photos by Beulah Taguiwalo 2004.8.8

Below: Karina (right) with Gwenn Galvez, Anvil Marketing Manager. Bottom: Karina and the children's books that she has written.



Her first ever sabbatical in 25 years: Starting September, Karina will be in Japan for a three month stay, for the Asia Leadership Fellowship Program of the Japan Foundation and the International House of Japan.



1 SEPTEMBER 2004

Still on the subject of women and publishing, here's more that's somehow related—women writers and multiple submissions, awards for women in publishing...

1 SEPTEMBER 2004



KaWoMeNaN

Selected and Edited
by Beulah P. Taguiwalo

Nice Girls Don't

By Aaron Shepard

Copyright © 1993 by Aaron Shepard. May be freely copied and shared for any noncommercial purpose as long as no text is altered or omitted. This article has appeared in *Once Upon A Time*, Fall 1993.

Over the past few years, I've discussed the issue of multiple submissions with numerous beginning children's writers, most of them female. I've come to the conclusion that this is not so much a marketing question as a gender issue.

Few men seem to have trouble with the idea of multiple submissions. They know they cannot afford to tie up a manuscript for a half year or more with an inefficient, ponderous, or overworked editor. They also know that withdrawing a manuscript after a shorter period is often tantamount to not sending it at all, since the editor may not yet have even glanced at it.

Most women know this too. Most would *like* to submit multiply, but they *don't*, for one simple reason: They don't dare. They're afraid of offending an editor.

This fear persists despite the following:

- Multiple submissions are now standard practice among professional writers and agents.
- All but a handful of publishing houses officially state they accept multiple submissions.
- The houses that officially *don't* consider multiple submissions often

will anyway, especially if the submission comes from a writer with credentials or is addressed to a specific editor.

- Editors are so accustomed to multiple submissions, many will *assume* a manuscript is one, even if not told so. (And if told it's exclusive, they are likely not to remember.)

As I listen to beginning female children's writers talk about editors, again and again an image from olden days comes to mind: A woman waiting by her phone for a man to call. She's afraid to go out in case she might miss him, and she's afraid to call *him* in case he might think her forward. As for her seriously dating more than one man at a time—well, nice girls don't.

Though most women today have advanced beyond this way of relating to men, they often show similar patterns in relations with editors. Their entire marketing strategy seems geared not so much to sell as to avoid offense.

Instead of asking, "How can I get this manuscript into the hands of an adequate number of editors in a reasonable time?", they will agonize about such disastrous scenarios as "What if two editors both want my story?" (The correct response is: *Celebrate.*)

It's time for female children's writers to stop giving the advantage to the male minority in their midst. Here's a suggestion for my less-than-intrepid colleagues: The next time you face a decision on marketing strategy, ask yourself, "What would I do if I were a man?"

Then take a deep breath and *do* it.

The Pandora Award:

"For a significant and valuable personal contribution to publishing"

The Pandora Award has been presented since 1981 to an individual or organisation for promoting positive images of women in publishing, bookselling and related trades. Since 1982 onwards the prize, appropriately enough, has been a writing box which is passed on from one winner to the next. The Award—Pandora's Box—will be presented to a woman or an organisation in the publishing industry that has consistently made significant and valuable contributions from which women have benefited.

The deadline for nominations is October 31, 2004 and winners will be announced in December 2004. Nominations may be sent to Lucy

Jane Tetlow, Women in Publishing Awards c/o The Authors Club, 40 Dover Street, London W1S 4NP. For more information, you may get in touch with the Award Officer Lucy Jane Tetlow at Tel. 020 7408 5092 or by e-mailing awards@wipub.org.uk

The Pandora Award and WiP

The Pandora Box award is just one of the awards given by Women in Publishing (WiP) UK. WiP UK was founded in 1979 to promote the interests of women in all areas of the publishing industry. Each year, WiP also gives the New Venture Award, given to pioneers who highlight the work and lives of under-represented groups in society.

WiP UK holds monthly women-only meetings every second Wednesday of the month to talk about things related to writing and publishing. "Is the Harry effect here to stay or was it just a one-trick wonder?" is the topic for September 8, 2004.

To know more about WiP UK and similar organizations in other countries go to <http://www.wipub.org.uk/> or email Sam Barber at sam@wipub.org.uk

UK prize for women in book publishing

The Kim Scott Walwyn Prize is the first in the UK to recognise the professional achievements of women in book publishing. Launched last March 2004 at the London Book Fair, the prize commemorates the life and career of Kim Scott Walwyn, a Publishing Director at Oxford University Press until her career was cut short in her early forties by illness.

"Kim was an extraordinary woman, and this prize will recognise women in publishing at whatever stage of their career who don't accept second-best and who really make a difference," says Francine Stock, spokeswoman for the prize. £3000 will be awarded every two years to a woman who has made an outstanding contribution in any area of book publishing in the UK. The judges are looking for women who show outstanding potential in their careers as well as high achievers. Women of any age who are working in any area of book publishing in the UK can apply. Full details and the judges' guidelines can be obtained from Booktrust, who are administering the prize. Contact Tarryn McKay on 020 8516 2972 or email tarryn@booktrust.org.uk

(A Glimpse... From page 1)

Textbooks continue to rule the public school system and are treated as “Bibles.” School teachers are heavily dependent on the textbooks and generally do not deviate from them.

When Karina was promoted to Assistant Publishing Manager for Local Publications in 1984 and then again, as Publishing Manager for Elementary-High School Division for NBS, Inc., she realized the importance of textbooks and how in most schools, even in the private sector, both students and teachers were totally dependent on their textbooks.

By 1990, Karina had grown frustrated with textbook development as it could not be done the way she thought it should be done. So she started a trade book publishing line by establishing Anvil Publishing, Inc. Anvil’s focus was to contribute to cultural development and publish local authors, and “make as many ideas as possible available to as many as possible so they can make informed decisions.” It began with cookbooks and romance novels, focusing on where it could be profitable. Traditional Filipino recipes were featured in the cookbooks. The bestsellers were those that told stories of the culture, or used an autobiographical style like that of restaurateur Nora Daza’s or food writer Doreen Fernandez’s classifications per geographic region.

The notion that Filipinos were not readers was dispelled by the sales boom of books that exposed the secrets of the Marcos regime after the

EDSA Revolution in 1986, after official press oppression ended. The millions of copies sold revealed that the books formerly being published simply did not interest the Filipino reader and that it was a challenge to Anvil to fill the need.

Karina recounted Anvil’s failed experiment in trying to get accomplished writers to write popular romances, and how books by a sex therapist unwittingly subsidized slow sellers like literature.

Karina explained that what Anvil has done is publish books before not considered publishable. We could tell that by the books displayed at the foyer table. The books ranged from cultural, sexual and psychological issues to biographies, poetry and recipes. There is now a trend of breaking manuscripts into smaller books to reduce the price, just as cigarettes can be sold in the Philippines by the piece instead of the whole pack.

Karina made no claims that Anvil has arrived, in fact she said that there is much work ahead. She discussed the responsibility of encouraging the Philippine youth to read more than just textbooks mandated by the schools. She also discussed the frustrating attempts with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts to consult each region to come up with a national index of 100 things every Filipino student should know about different fields of Philippine culture. There was much disagreement between regions and even objections from Mindanao representatives that

their region was not even on the Philippine flag.

There was a general consensus during the question and answer portion that contributing textbooks to decolonizing education would be a good cause for the local publishing industry to fight for. Several suggestions were made: clarifying the Filipino identity, building a sense of pride in the country and its rich culture, appreciating past struggles and forging ahead to make a positive impact on the future. □

The Manila Women’s Forum

The Manila Women’s Forum (MWF) is a cross-cultural network for women. It provides opportunities to build friendships, to talk to women of various cultures, and to share information about resources. Our meetings are intended to provide intellectual stimulation and lead to personal and professional development. All women are welcome to join. The current officers are **Lisa Lumbao**, Chair, Programs, Treasurer, and Newsletter. **Susan Nishihira**, Programs. **Heather Davenport**, Database. **Beaulah P. Taguiwalo**, Newsletter, Website.

Cost of membership is P300 per year. Members receive a copy of the current mailing list in addition to the newsletter, which is also sent to non-members. A contribution is collected at each monthly meeting: P20 for members, and P40 for non-members. Please contact Lisa Lumbao at Tel. 812-3932, Tel/Fax 813-0168, or at lumbao@mozcom.com for more information about MWF.

Visit our website – a work in progress
www.geocities.com/manilawomensforum

MWF Newsletter
c/o Lisa Kircher Lumbao
61 Cosmopolitan Condominium
134 Valero St., Salcedo Village
Makati City 1227