



**Interview with  
Karine Pansa, President  
International Publishers Association**

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**KENNEALLY:** The inaugural session of the Advanced Publishing Institute, held last month at New York University, employed case studies and problem-solving exercises to examine the changes sweeping over publishing. On the weeklong program's final day, International Publishers Association President Karine Pansa offered the class of mid-career publishing executives her global perspective. Karine Pansa, a children's book publisher based in Brazil, joins me now from her São Paulo office. Welcome to Velocity of Content, Karine.

**PANSA:** Thank you so much, Chris.

**KENNEALLY:** The API address you gave considered professional responsibility as seen from many angles, and I want to explore that important theme. So tell us, how did you address, first of all, the responsibility you feel as a children's book publisher?

**PANSA:** Well, Chris, it was an amazing experience to share that time with those students and share my thoughts with them. They were willing to hear about my international experience and also about my career as a children's book publisher. Publishers have an enormous responsibility, and us as children's books publishers have an even bigger responsibility. I know that not only from my career, but also as a mother. So that ability that we have to create shared moments between parents and their children; the opportunity to cover important topics in a way that children can relate to themselves; and the learning of a language – so lots of experiences all related to books.

**KENNEALLY:** Artificial intelligence and chatbots loom as threats for many publishers, Karine Pansa, just as ebooks did a decade ago. What lessons have you drawn from that last existential crisis that you hope publishers will apply to AI?

**PANSA:** It's interesting, Chris. 10 years ago, I was in Yale, so having the same course. I was in the audience at that time. Publishers historically are big embracers of technology, and there have been so many new technologies we have adapted and incorporated into our business. At that time, I remember having various reassuring voices telling that ebooks were not going to replace printed books. They were just going to be another type of books, another methodology to sell them and to find them as consumers.



So I think that we have nowadays the same perspective. We need to embrace artificial intelligence. We need to adapt it to our works. It is already being adapted for different parts in the publishing business, and I'm sure this will continue to be used in different ways. We just need to be very careful about the responsibility of the content – where this content comes from – so the learning process of those machines. This is something that needs to be discussed with big tech, with the authors, and all involved in this environment.

If I need to say something very short, I would say embrace it and work with it within your business.

**KENNEALLY:** You contrast the responsibility that publishers take for their work with the abdication of responsibility by the large tech companies. Karine Pansa, what is irresponsible about the way these companies are spearheading the drive to AI?

**PANSA:** It is amazing, the value of publishers. What is amazing in many ways is that we try to make the book the perfect bridge between the author and the reader as if we don't exist, as if we didn't have to do anything. So the reader shouldn't see the work of the publisher. Sometimes, people just don't realize that a publisher exists.

If we contrast that to those large companies, they're not legally responsible for what is in their platform. Google – they make sure they just point to the most relevant search results, social media, and individual content. So this is individual content responsibility. It would be refreshing to see those AI platforms to take a different approach and to take responsibility on what they publish.

**KENNEALLY:** In 2025, the European Accessibility Act will require that all books sold digitally into the European Union are available in accessible format. Beyond any legal mandates, why should publishers take accessibility as a responsibility?

**PANSA:** This is a great example, Chris, and something that is really important for publishers around the world, not just in Europe. It will affect many international publishers. Publishers – they want their books to be sold and to reach as many potential readers as possible. At the moment, it's not a reality, because we have non-accessible books most of the time. All of the discussions since the adoption of the Marrakesh Treaty and the European Accessibility Act show that publishers can change their workflow, and they are able to make born-accessible books a reality, so they start from accessible books to create a title.

**KENNEALLY:** As IPA president, Karine Pansa, you have responsibility for supporting the freedom to publish around the world. What threats to this freedom do publishers face today?



PANSA: Chris, this has increasingly become more and more discussed recently. So the freedom to publish, like the freedom to read and the freedom of expression, is under increasing pressure around the world. We see publishers being threatened in many different ways, whether that is through more traditional state pressure, but also on social media, like media pressure. We see books, especially for the young, being targeted. As an example, in Türkiye, that might mean just being classified, but some books were classified obscene, and they were forced to be taken out of the shelves or to be shrink-wrapped so that children could not have access to that. Those books – they were mainly of LGBTQ themes. So it's more and more targeting those subjects. The same pressure can affect either booksellers or librarians, and the talk of book bans is present nowadays in many, many countries.

When considering the International Freedom to Publish Prize, our colleagues at AAP, the Association of American Publishers, they were confronted with many publishers doing brave work, but they didn't want much attention to their work, what is being done, because they don't want to be seen in this position. So it is something that we see as well in some countries. Nominations for our 2024 Prix Voltaire are now open until March 22<sup>nd</sup>, and we hope to be able to recognize more brave publishers who stand as an inspiration to us all.

KENNEALLY: Karine Pansa, president of the International Publishers Association, thanks for speaking with me on Velocity of Content.

PANSA: Thank you so much, Chris. It was a pleasure.

KENNEALLY: That's all for now. Our producer is Jeremy Brieske of Burst Marketing. You can subscribe to the program wherever you go for podcasts. You can also find Velocity of Content on YouTube as part of the CCC channel. I'm Christopher Kenneally. Thanks for joining me.

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