

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:04] DC: It takes the right skills and the right innovation to design and manage meaningful print marketing solutions. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse, where we explore all facets of print and marketing that create stellar communications and sales opportunities for business success. I'm your host, Deborah Corn, the Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse. Thanks for tuning in. Listen long and prosper.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:33] DC: Hey, everybody. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. This is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. Today, I am honored to have a guest that I have been chasing to be on this podcast for quite a while, but she has a job that keeps her very busy and keeps her traveling a lot. I want to thank Ashley Roberts, who is the Content Director of Printing Impressions, for making some time to join us on the podcast today. Hello, Ashley, and welcome to the podcast.

[0:01:06] AR: Hi, Deb. I'm very happy to be here.

[0:01:09] DC: It is an honor, as I mentioned. You are the Content Director of Printing Impressions. I met you when you were an entry-level. You were working with Mark Michelson, and we were interacting, when I used to come to the office to judge the Gold Ink Awards, and you're the one who told me about what's the place with the pork sandwich?

[0:01:30] AR: Oh, DiNic's.

[0:01:30] DC: DiNic's. You're the one who told me about DiNic's. You're like, "Sorry, Philly. Everybody, hold on." You're like, "Forget about the Philly cheesesteak. Go get this roast pork sandwich," and you did not steer me wrong. That broccoli rub was delicious. Can you tell everybody about your journey from West Virginia University to NYU, which I looked up, very fascinating, to the role that you currently have now?

[0:01:58] AR: Yeah, sure. Actually, since you mentioned it, I think I met you 10-plus years ago at this point.

[0:02:03] DC: Yeah, at least. It's been quite a while. Yeah. I, like most people, stumbled into the printing industry. I thought I wanted to go into children's book publishing. I started, obviously, West Virginia, as you mentioned, undergrad, got a degree in English. What do you do with an English degree? You become a writer, journalist, teacher, something along those lines. Had a year off before going to grad school. Went to grad school for media, loved children's publishing, and then found magazine publishing, so moved into that. When I graduated, I worked for a pharmaceutical magazine.

Here's a strange small world story. I worked for a year up in North Jersey at a group of pharmaceutical magazines. After about a year, we decided, my now husband and I decided we were going to move down to Philadelphia, because he was going to go to school outside the city. I was just applying for jobs. Saw a senior editor position open up at NAPCO Media. Mark Michelson picked my resume out of the pile, because he knew the NYU program that I went to.

Pat Henry had been involved with, for those listening, many of you, I'm sure know Pat Henry, a legend in the printing industry, journalism field. He had taught at the school, and so he knew the program a little bit. When I actually took the role he hired me, I went and told my editor at the pharmaceutical magazine, "Hey, I'm moving down to Philly. I took this job. Really sorry. Loved my time here. No hard feelings. Great experience." She was like, "If you don't mind me asking, where are you headed?" I said, "Oh, I'm going to a magazine called Printing Impressions." Mind you, this is two hours north in New Jersey. She goes, "Is Mark Michelson still there?" I was like, "What?" I said, "Yes, that's who hired me." Mark Michelson was her first boss out of college.

[0:03:55] DC: Oh, God.

[0:03:57] AR: In the early 1980s, she started at Printing Impressions was her first job. My first day at Printing Impressions, I said to Mark, "Hey, I think you knew my previous boss." He remembered her. He had such kind words about her and was like, "Oh, she was such a hard worker." Really just a small world in the B2B journalism field and trade journalism. Yeah. Now it's been 10 years, actually, 11 years, and I'm still here.

[0:04:27] DC: Tell me how you moved up the ranks there. When I was there, I would send you my articles and stuff and you would coordinate, and like I said, when I came to visit in the office. I don't believe you were writing stories at that point. I thought that you were doing social media. Then there was the other woman that you worked with, too. I forget her name. She was really cool, too. She did a lot of the video editing.

[0:04:50] AR: Oh, Annie.

[0:04:51] DC: Yeah, Annie. She was awesome. Tell everybody a little bit about your meteoric rise to now that you've taken over Mark's position.

[0:05:01] AR: Yeah. I did do a little bit of social media when I started and when you met me, but I was actually the production editor. I think at the time, they had maybe had a production editor at some point, but hadn't in quite a few years. When I joined the team, I was writing a little bit, but I was really hired to run the production of the magazines, of which we only had three at the time. That, obviously, over the years expanded and we added more brands, but I was doing the production and then I was doing all of the newsletters. More like the digital production side of things.

That evolved over the years, because as you know, the different channels that we have evolved. I started helping out with webinars sometimes and videos. I think Mark Subers randomly, when I first started was like, "Hey, have you ever been in a video before?" I was, "No." He said, "Why don't you come into the Franklin room and shoot a video with us real quick?" I did. And that was the start of it. Actually, the reason why I now do as many videos as I do, and I'm so comfortable is because Subers was the one who just threw it at me as an option. That was pretty cool.

Then over the years at some point, I was promoted to managing editor. I had a small production team, who I worked with, who did the design, and we hired Jesse, who's fantastic. She's been running production now for a few years, and I was managing that team. I made sure all the books got out on time, articles were laid out, ran that whole process, until it came upon us that Mark would be retiring.

At first, and I am not afraid to admit this, because I've said this on videos before, I did not want to take over Mark's role. I knew how hard it was and I was very resistant to it. I think Denise had brought it up to me a few years ago. I was like, "No, no, no."

[0:06:59] DC: Denise Gustavson.

[0:07:01] AR: Yes, Denise Gustavson. Yup.

[0:07:03] DC: She was the editorial director?

[0:07:04] AR: Director. Yeah, editorial director. I had no desire. I was like, this is a tough role. Not only do people come to you for things, which is great, but people blame you for things. If something goes wrong, or any time there's any issue, you are the buck stops here situation with the brand. I was very nervous about it. Even though I'm not a small child, I still feel like, I can't do that. I'm a teenager. I can't. Even though, I'm now approaching 40. Yeah, it was a road of a few years, noodling on that possibility. Then when it actually came up and I had a lot of support from Mark and a lot of support from Denise, who were like, "You can do this. We know that you can do it." That's when I finally felt comfortable.

[0:07:55] DC: You've done an amazing job. I'm glad that you got over what some people call imposter syndrome.

[0:08:01] AR: Big time.

[0:08:02] DC: But you were capable of doing the job. I just love that you were like, "Hold on a second. Do I want all of this responsibility?" Which is actually a very sane way of looking into things. As you know, I'm the Executive Director of Girls Who Print, and this topic comes up a lot. One of the things that we've been speaking about, as far as looking at your career and where you want to go and really looking at it, not as a vanity thing, but is this the life that I want to have? Do I actually want people reporting to me, like you were thinking about, versus, yes, I want everybody reporting to me, because then I have power, and look at me, and I've got a new business card.

A lot of people measure their success by these milestones that are thrust upon us. I actually love that you even admitted to yourself, huh, not that you haven't had an easy job and you didn't want to move up, but you were like, "Do I want this to be my life?" I'm glad that you decided to make it your life. I think that I get all of the newsletters and I know that you know that I read them and I read the articles, because we discuss them sometimes. Every editor brings a personality with them. What I've noticed is that there is way more storytelling in your materials now. It's more personal and human, even though in all of the trade media everywhere, I don't care what country you're in, yes, there's tons of advertorials, but shocker, that's how magazines, that's how media businesses stay in business, so there's that. But there has to be other things. Let me ask you this. How do you define journalism and what does journalism look like within the printing industry?

[0:10:03] AR: I'm glad that you brought this up. It's actually something that we've been over the past few years, really been trying to focus on. I remember the days where our – and no shade to anyone, but we used to have a lot of press releases on our site and in our newsletter. We take our engagement and traffic very seriously. We've at one point, a few years ago, we developed these brand health teams, where we look at the engagement that we're getting on our content. While press releases and that type of news is necessary for us to run on our site, because people need to know what technology is coming out. What are the OEMs, the new hottest press, or printheads, whatever, the inks, they need to have that information.

[0:10:51] DC: Where are they going to get it, if not from a trade magazine?

[0:10:53] AR: Right, exactly. But does that have to be the predominant part of our materials that we put online? Because you can get those press releases on PR Newswire. You can get them anywhere. Yes, we still try to cover that type of news, but we've started shifting over the last few years to, as you said, more storytelling. We want more original content. We want those stories, those success stories, tips and tools, tricks, that kind of content, because that's what's going to help you run your business better.

Yes, you need to know what the latest technology is, but you also need to know what other people in your peers in your segment are doing to be successful. In our brand health teams, we

identified that the percentage of content that was going online, that was press releases, and we've really tried to decrease that and increase the original content.

On your point of what I view journalism, I think anything for our industry in particular that is going to provoke thought, or provoke you to reconsider how you're doing business, one way or the other. Either it's good, like oh, yeah, I'm on the right path, or, hmm, maybe I could be doing this something a little bit better, if it's about sustainability. We've published in the past, 10 small steps to be a little more sustainable. Maybe you're starting on your sustainability journey, and those 10 small steps are going to help you actually take some actionable steps to start that journey.

My goal is to bring more of that content. We also, just with this issue of Printing Impressions that we just wanted to print on, we're bringing back profiles, company profiles, which is something that a few years ago, we did away with. We used to have a printing company on the cover of the magazine every month.

[0:12:49] DC: I do remember that.

[0:12:51] AR: Yup, yup.

[0:12:51] DC: A lot of gentlemen. Just want to say, there was a lot of gentlemen on those covers.

[0:12:56] AR: Mm-hmm. I think that was a big driving factor. I think it was getting hard to showcase the diversity of our industry, because there are a lot of people of color, women that we should be showing. It felt like the same thing every month. We shifted away from that. But something that I heard anecdotally, was people were looking for those profiles again. In the February issue of Printing Impressions, we have two company profiles and we'll do it every other month. Not the cover story, but we want to showcase those stories, so you can see what your peers are doing. I think that is important. That is something that – I think the main thing is we're constantly adjusting and seeing what's working, seeing what's not working, listening to the audience.

If you want to see more of something, let us know, because I am very flexible and open to trying new things. I don't think we should stay. Things are evolving so quickly, I don't think we should stay stagnant and keep doing the same thing over and over.

[0:13:55] DC: I definitely agree that in this very strange way, my experience with printers is, is they like to know what they're doing is within the range of what other people are doing. What they're charging is normal, or they use weird words when it comes to it, even though I've also come to learn that every single business is different. I used to really rail against the answer, it depends. Now I realize that that is actually the most honest answer anybody can give, because it's not just the equipment people have. It's who's running the equipment, who are the customers? What is life like that day? It can be totally different. It is helpful to hear from the print shops themselves and the customers who run the equipment, how it actually works in the real world. I appreciate that.

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[0:14:52] DC: Get ready to turn up the volume on print. PrintFM is a global internet radio station dedicated exclusively to print and graphic communications, accessible around the clock in every time zone. No more searching across channels and apps. PrintFM brings relevant topical programming from Print Media Centr, Girls Who Print, and an array of industry contributors who bring their own perspectives, guests, and conversations to the mix. PrintFM also broadcasts from industry events, with live shows being scheduled throughout the year. Visit printfm.com to explore our daily programming, event schedules, and opportunities to share your content or sponsor our shows. Expert discussions, real-world insight, and industry voices are just a click away. Listen long and prosper.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:15:51] DC: Another topic that is coming up a lot, especially through PRINTING United Alliance, which owns NAPCO. Well, there is no more NAPCO Media, right? It's just one organization, right?

[0:16:02] AR: Yeah. Where they're going. Yeah.

[0:16:04] DC: You have a new AI program going on, which I definitely am all for. I like the way that you're approaching it, because it's almost instructional, versus you should be doing this, which I cannot stand when people are like, "We have a workforce development problem. Thank you very much. Try the veal." With AI becoming more prevalent in all of our lives, especially in writing and things like that, how do you think that AI is changing journalism and industry reporting, if at all?

[0:16:40] AR: Yeah. This is something that we have talked about a lot. Just in general, I think, there was the news a weeks ago of layoffs in a major newspaper, and I think it is a little scary to be in journalism right now, to be totally honest, because AI is pretty good. What I remember two years ago, or three years ago, putting content into, say, ChatGPT and asking it to create a headline, honestly, the output a lot of times was crap. It just wasn't good. Now, if you do the same thing, it actually comes up with some pretty great headline options. Or, if you need it to synthesize content down to a few bullet points, or something, it does a really great job. I hate that. It makes my job easier. I do, full transparency, I use it a lot of time for social posts. Sometimes, I'll have it help me create a social post, or I'll actually help it create questions for me, if I'm going into an interview where I don't know about the topic. I will feed it a couple of different sources and say, can you come up with some questions that'll help me do X, Y, and Z for this article. It does help.

With that said, though, it does make me a little nervous for the future of journalism, because it's doing – it's already only a few years into this generative AI that's available to all of us. It's doing such a great job that I could see it changing journalism permanently. I mean, really changing journalism permanently. Do people care, if they're reading an article that is informational, educational, gives them everything they need, is exactly what they're looking for, yet it was written by AI, do they care? I mean, probably not.

[0:18:33] DC: Okay, I'm going to push back a little.

[0:18:34] AR: Okay. Yeah.

[0:18:35] DC: I only care when it's so blatantly obvious. I'm like, at least put in a little effort to do something here and there is no way that this just didn't spit out from something and it's being posted.

[0:18:53] AR: Right. Here's something that I think about a lot. I don't know why. It could be arbitrary, but I do think that there is a difference between using AI to write content for online and using AI to write content for a print. To me, I hold print to a higher standard still, even though things are evolving. I wouldn't feel comfortable publishing in the magazine, a fully AI-written article. If someone used it to help them write a headline, or to help them format, fine. I would like to know that. That I can accept. But if it's a fully AI-written article, I don't feel comfortable necessarily right now in 2026 running it in the printed magazine.

Online, I think it's a double standard. Online, I feel it's a little bit different. It's a little more casual. Maybe people expect more AI-generated content online. I do agree with you that if it is blatant, I do not like that. It's the same thing when you see videos that are AI gen, and you can tell it's AI, it's almost unsettling. You're like, that's not a real human, or that's not a real animal. It feels –

[0:19:59] DC: It's annoying, because I really thought that a cat saved the baby from a bear on the porch. I honestly did, the first time I saw it. I was sending the video to whoever, I'm like, "Look at this cat. He's a badass." Then the next day, I see a dog doing the same thing. I'm like, hmm, they got me. Now, I don't believe anything, unfortunately.

[0:20:20] AR: Right. Yeah, I don't believe anything either. I'm very cynical and skeptical of everything. Yeah, I do think AI is changing our expectations as readers, as the audience, but it's also changing how I'm looking at content. I still hold print to a higher standard though, as of right now. Ask me again in a year. Am I going to say that it's come such a long way that if we have editors and subject matter experts reviewing everything and making the needed tweaks and massaging the content, so that it's ready for print, then maybe I'll think differently. Right now, I have –

[0:21:00] DC: No, I get it. I think that hearing what you said, what I started thinking about is something printed as permanent. You can't go back and fix something, if some AI thing hallucinated the way a press operates with one of your advertisers. You're screwed. Online,

okay, let me log in and make a little update here. Everybody moving forward is going to see the correct information. Everybody who saw it before it was changed, maybe that's how you found out that there was a problem. I get why there is more of a, I'm going to say fear, but I'm not implying that you're like, "Oh, my God. What are we going to do?"

There is more of a, it better be right if we're printing it, especially since there is also a moral obligation. I think that when people, at least people who are at least gen Xers and probably the upper end of the millennial still grew up, that if it's in print, it is probably true, because you can sue a magazine for incorrect information. If it's online, it's probably not true, because just because you see it on the Internet, who the hell knows? Do your own research. It's very interesting. We'll have to do a follow up and check in. Do you want to say anything else about that before we move on?

[0:22:27] AR: No. I mean, the one other thing is as I said before, we're constantly evolving. I think just in the last year, we added those disclaimers to the bottom of our content, because we know, and you and I think we have this conversation that in the disclaimer, which we've had for a long time at the bottom of our contributed content. Now we have a disclaimer that says, AI may have been used, because it's also hard to verify when someone's using AI.

[0:22:53] DC: Says you.

[0:22:55] AR: Well, so, yes. There's telltale signs, for sure. The thing is, it is getting much better, even since we spoke about that last time, it is evolving.

[0:23:04] DC: I know. I don't think the printers look at it the way we do. We're marketing people. I would never call myself a journalist, or an author. I'm a blogger. But I read enough of them to know the structure. I'm like, oh, my God. Like, come on. Change a few words here.

[0:23:19] AR: Yeah, we can tell. Yeah, totally. We can tell. I can tell, too. Usually, there's some signs. But with that said, it's getting better, the more it reads and writes.

[0:23:29] DC: Yes. You invited me to return. I call myself the returning champion blogger for Printing Impressions. I sent you my own disclaimer about my use of AI, which that I collaborated

with it to get information and do research for me and to pretty much be my editor. But it didn't write it for me. It fixed it for me. Then I sent the disclaimer along with it, so that I'm not posing as somebody who has access to these stats and figures and the time to do all of that. I appreciate that, everything that you've done to bring that out in the light, and also that you're focusing on AI through an initiative, through the Alliance that honestly, I think it's helpful for people. A lot of them, I don't.

I'm like, all right, here's somebody that just wants to make some money off of a fad. Enjoy yourself. I'm staying away from that. But I'm very curious about your AI stuff. I actually sent you an email yesterday. I'm like, I have some contributions for your –

[0:24:32] AR: Oh, yes. Side note, I sent that to our editor who handles that newsletter.

[0:24:34] DC: Side note, I was like, “Oh, I love this newsletter. Let me get in on that.”

[SPONSOR MESSAGE]

[0:24:38] DC: Supporting professional growth is good for people, and it's great for business. When you sponsor Girls Who Print, you're helping to deliver mentorship, leadership development, and career advancement tools to women across the print industry. Our annual sponsorship packages are designed to fit companies of all sizes with benefits that align with your goals, support equitable workforce development in your company and the industry, and elevate your brand. If you're ready to stand out and step up to support Girls Who Print, visit girlswhoprint.org and download our sponsorship packages today. Empower long and prosper.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:25:22] DC: Okay, let's put AI to the side right now. What makes a story worth telling?

[0:25:31] AR: That is a great question. Sometimes it hits you in the face. There have been times where I've had a conversation with someone and they've told me something that maybe they don't necessarily think is a – like, that you say it in passing like, “Oh, this happened.” I'm like, “Oh, that would be a great story to tell, because there's a lesson there.” Whether it's

someone who is doing an expansion, or can't even think of any examples right now, but any story that we've told a lot of times it'll come up, because someone mentioned something in passing. But then, there might be a mistake that someone has told us about.

I remember, I was covering a story once and it was just an installation story. I've probably told people this story before, but it was an installation story for Bob, for Implant Impressions. It was just going to be a run of the mill, like this implant installed this piece of equipment. What were your considerations? What did you have to think about? What were the workflow? All that, the standard stuff.

At the end of the interview, I always say, is there anything else that we didn't talk about that you'd want to mention? The person said, "Oh, well, this is actually the second one that we got." The first one, they were trying to – they had a crane. Putting it through the second-floor window and some human error, it fell, and it was embedded, like four feet into the ground. I said, "What now?"

[0:27:03] DC: It's like the roadrunner in the anvil cartoon. Oh, my God.

[0:27:07] AR: Actually, it might have been the fourth floor from the – funny. It was a big piece of equipment and it teeter-tottered and went, whoop, and right down into the ground and was embedded. They actually had to get a whole new one. I'm thinking, why didn't you tell me that at the beginning? Immediately, I got off that call. I remember, I went over to Bob's office and I told him that and we were both like, "Well, that's the lead." That is a story, because yes, maybe people won't walk away from that and be like, well, make sure you have a really great crane operator when you bring your – But that's a consideration.

[0:27:39] DC: Yeah. Do you have the proper insurance in case there's an emergency? I think the biggest story is even, how did the company that sold that press deal with that customer? Of course, it's not their problem at that time. I get it. But there is still a relationship to protect and there's still another press that has to come along. How they handled that would be extremely interesting to people, I think.

[0:28:06] AR: Yeah. I think at the time, we did talk about that. I mean, this was 10 years ago at this point, but I will always remember that, because it was one of those like, wow, this is a human interest type piece. In addition to just the normal run-of-the-mill installation, things that we covered. Sometimes something like that will hit me when I hear it, a story that I feel needs to be told. Other times, I think we talked about this, but when it's a PSP who is making a major change, investing in new equipment or new people or expanding things like that, I want to share those stories. Because again, good or bad, there's going to be takeaways that the industry can learn from the person's mistakes or choices.

Actually, a perfect example is in the, again, the February issue of Printing Impressions. I did a story on expansion and I spoke with Rosemary from Blooming Color and they did an expansion, buying another facility, and she walked through some of the considerations that they made. Also, some of the things that maybe she should have thought of in the beginning. Something like that, being able to share those stories, someone else in the industry who's going through the same thing might read that and be like, "Oh, wait a minute. I didn't consider that. Wow, I should be thinking of that first."

Yeah. I think, I'm going to say what you said, it depends. It depends. I mean, what's worth telling a story, sometimes it hits you and then sometimes maybe it doesn't hit you right away. But as you're writing it, or talking to the person, you realize like, wow, there are some really great points here that are hopefully going to help someone in the future.

[0:29:58] DC: I mean, I'm going to tell you what I think your job is, Ashley, because this is my thing. I think your job is to give the audience what they need, what they want and also, discovery, some discovery things like, oh, there's something you might not think of. I think of mergers and acquisitions in that lane in a lot of ways, because if you're not thinking about mergers and acquisitions, then you're not thinking about it at all. But if you actually read those articles and listen to those stories, you can see that there is a way to prepare yourself and for when that moment comes, so that you can get the most out of the business that you can.

It's like, do we put a new roof on the house, or do we spend \$20,000 and put a new roof on the house to get \$100,000 more, or do we just leave it and cut our losses? People have to make those decisions.

All right, one follow-up question to this. In that discovery/ also reporting on things that, like for an example might be, how a printing business incorporated some of the new AI strategies into their business and whatever those results might have been. That would be a mixture of a topical story that people want information on and also a story worth telling and also, one that helps you guys as well, which is it's allowed to do that. How do you either seek out these stories, or how are you made aware of them?

[0:31:31] AR: Mm-hmm. A lot of the time, it is in discussions with people. I actually have a document where I write down, I have it sorted by different topics and different areas of interest, where I keep track of different companies that are doing things, if I get tips from people. Sometimes people will reach out and they'll say, "Hey, this is happening. I'm acquiring this company," and then I'll reach out to them and maybe do a video, or do an article on that acquisition. I just this week, Royal Printing in Wisconsin was a couple of weeks ago, named a finalist in the Wisconsin Manufacturer of the Year Awards in two different areas, which is really exciting for them and for the industry, because it's not just printing. It's all manufacturing. I think this week, which this podcast –

[0:32:24] DC: I saw something about it, it was a top article. Yeah, yeah.

[0:32:28] AR: Yeah. I just did a video with –

[0:32:29] DC: It was a video. Right. The guy.

[0:32:31] AR: Chris Carpenter of Royal.

[0:32:32] DC: I'll tell you, I really do look at, read every one of your letters.

[0:32:34] AR: Yes, thank you. Yeah.

[0:32:35] DC: You're welcome.

[0:32:36] AR: I just did a video with that. It was from a tip from somebody who said, "Hey, did you see that they were named a finalist in this?" I reached out to them and then we proceeded

with a video. A lot of times, it'll come from tips from people, or press release goes out and I'll make note of it for the future, if we're covering that topic. Conversations that we have with people at events will a lot of times help dictate what we're going to bring to the audience in the future. We make our editorial calendar in the summer before the following year. Our 2026 calendar, I create in August, July, August, I'm working on it.

Some of the topics are evergreen. We do them every year. Inkjet updates. We usually try to do cover offset in some way to give that love. Other things, like AI, data, workforce development, those are things, topics that start to come up that we cover based on conversations that we have, based on trends of sessions at different industry events, not just our own. Word of mouth is a lot of it, and people coming to us, talking to us in person. We also look at engagement.

As I mentioned earlier, we have the brand health team. We look at engagement where people are actually spending their time. We look at that and we, as I said, we pay attention to that very seriously. If there is a topic, great example is we have a brand called Apparellist, that is for the apparel decorator community. Cassie Green is the editor for that brand. She had a DTF asset that they put out. It was a one-on-one asset couple summers, two summers ago, and it went through the roof. I mean, unbelievable amount of downloads and people engaging with this asset. Cassie started a series on that. I mean, she did subsequent follow-up articles. I think, and I could be wrong, but I think there was a 201 type of article for more advanced people. There was a updated version. I mean, she really took that and ran with it, because the people were hungry for that content. We look at that very seriously. Different ways. Word of mouth, engagement, traffic, talking to people in person.

[0:34:48] DC: Everybody connect with Ashley and get your stories. Has there been a story you covered that changed the way that you personally see the printing industry?

[0:34:58] AR: I do have an answer, but I can't talk about it quite yet.

[0:35:02] DC: Excellent. I love that. We'll have to stay tuned with everything from Printing Impressions and Ashley. I love it. Okay, you actually recorded a conversation with me, because you're doing a podcast about the new content that's on the site, even though I call myself a returning champion, because I did blog for, I think it was over 10 years. I think it was almost 10

years. Then took a little break, but we're back now. During that conversation, you asked me a fun question, so I'm reciprocating. If you could interview anyone, anyone, anyone, anyone, does not have to be in the printing industry, past or present, who would it be and why?

[0:35:44] AR: I love this question. I had a really hard time actually thinking of someone. I had a couple of people pop into my head. I actually want to share two people.

[0:35:53] DC: Okay.

[0:35:54] AR: One universally known person and then one personal connection. I started a book club, a small book club. It's actually grown. But last year, I can't even believe I'm saying this, but last year was the first time I ever read, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou and it blew me away. It had a profound impact on me. I mean, I know the listeners can't see this, but how many –

[0:36:19] DC: Wow. Oh, my God. Okay, so let me describe it to people, okay? Picture a doctor's office and a file and all of the tabs in that file. Ashley has flagged every page of that book with a sticky, or something. That is insane. Like you are teaching a course in it, or something.

[0:36:41] AR: Yes. Yes.

[0:36:41] DC: Amazing.

[0:36:42] AR: Seriously. I was blown away by the way that she so vividly described circumstances in her life. Some of it was traumatic. I mean, really traumatic situations, but also really funny. I mean, she made me laugh out loud in this book, even though it focused on things that were a lot of times really hard to read. I am not a black woman, but I am a woman and I connected with a lot of what she went through on one of the levels, being a woman and how strong and powerful she comes off as a strong, powerful woman and her sense of identity and her sense of survival. The way that she came out the other side of a lot of these things, I would love to sit down with her. I mean if she was still alive. Sit down with her and just talk about her experiences. Also, I have to say, I read this book, physically read it, but I also listened to the audiobook at the same time, because she –

[0:37:41] DC: She recorded it?

[0:37:43] AR: Yes. She is the narrator of the audiobook. There are parts in the book where she's talking about being in church and singing hymns and different – her grandmother singing things to her. She actually sings in the audiobook and it gave me chills. I mean, just hearing her relay these memories and these experiences just seriously blew me away. I'd love to sit down with her, talk to her about how she came to have this strong sense of identity and this sense of self, which I think for me is something, as we talked about earlier with imposter syndrome, I struggle with. I struggle with my sense of identity and my knowledge. I'm always doubting myself. Yeah, that's my person. People will know. Then the other one is my grandmother.

[0:38:32] DC: I love that.

[0:38:35] AR: She, my one grandmother, she died when I was in my early 20s, and I was very close with her. In the last year or so of her life, I was one of her primary caretakers. I would go over there, make sure she ate, make sure she had dinner, take her to doctor's appointments and she always would watch us growing up. I would say, she was part of my formative years, but I regret not having conversations with her that as an adult now with a fully developed brain, I would ask her. But she died when I was in my early 20s at the age of 94. She lived a long, healthy life, but I just didn't have that chance to really get to know her on a personal level. She was always just my grandma. I wish that I had that chance, because I have – my only living grandparent is 97. She's my grandmother and she is in fantastic health. She's just a firecracker. She's still traveling. She reads a hundred plus books.

[0:39:36] DC: Wow.

[0:39:36] AR: Yes.

[0:39:37] DC: 97. Wow.

[0:39:37] AR: She read a hundred plus books a year.

[0:39:39] DC: Oh, my God.

[0:39:40] AR: Yes. It's wild. I actually did this thing. We'll maybe find this interesting. Have you heard of Storyworth?

[0:39:47] DC: No.

[0:39:49] AR: Okay. Storyworth is a company that you can send a family member a gift of Storyworth, and they are sent a question every week for a year. So, 52 questions. You can choose the questions. They give suggested questions, and then that family member writes however much they want. It's all online. At the end of the year, they print it as a book.

[0:40:14] DC: I love this.

[0:40:16] AR: Yes. My grandmother, my living grandmother, her name is Lois, my sister and I did this for her a couple of years ago, two, three years ago. She went through the whole year, answered all these questions. I went up to visit her, and she gave me a box of pictures. We went through all these. She was born in 1928. She had all these really old, great pictures that I then went in with my experience in publishing. I placed them. I edited the whole book, and I had it printed. We've now, at this point, had many printed, and we've given them to family members, and it's really great, because I have all these stories from my grandmother. I wish I had that for my other grandmother. That's my –

[0:40:59] DC: I love that. We're going to put a link to Storyworth in the show notes. I think I'm going there right after we speak.

[SPONSOR MESSAGE]

[0:41:09] DC: Like what you hear? Leave us a comment, click a few stars, share this episode, and please subscribe to the show. Are you interested in being the guest and sharing your information with our active and growing global audience? Podcasts are trending as a potent direct marketing and educational channel for brands and businesses who want to provide portable content for customers and consumers. Visit printmediacentr.com, click on podcasts, and request a partner package today. Share long and prosper.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:41:44] DC: Speaking about the show notes, this is the time to tell everybody the offerings that you want to speak about. You don't have to give URLs, because we're going to put the links in the podcast. Wherever you're listening, just scroll to where the information is and that's where the links are. Go for it.

[0:42:01] AR: Okay. Well, of course, I'm going to plug Printing Impressions, because we bring you all of the relevant news and business tips in the printing industry. Our parent organization is PRINTING United Alliance, as we mentioned before. If you're a member of PRINTING United Alliance, there are tons of resources. We have subject matter experts. I know you mentioned, we have our AI consulting business now. We have experts in OSHA and HR and government affairs. I mean, we are just stacked with subject matter experts. Definitely check out the alliance. If you're not a member, this is the plug to go become a member, or find out more. Yeah.

We have a lot of other brands, too. If you're not in the commercial space, I mean, we have a packaging brand, just Packaging Impressions, In-plant Impressions, Wide-format Impressions, Apparelist, which I mentioned before, and we have promo impressions, which is dedicated to the promo space. We are trying to bring relevant content to as many segments in the industry as possible.

[0:43:05] DC: What about the newsletter that my new blog series, cultivating, captivating careers? You're also sticking some of my podcast From the Printerverse in there, too.

[0:43:18] AR: Right. Yes, we have a daily newsletter. It's new content Mondays through Thursdays. Then we do a recap newsletter on Fridays. If you want to just – you should look at every single day, but Friday, we do a recap. You can subscribe by going to our website. There is a clear button to do so. Yeah. We put all of our printed content. That's not going to be a downloadable asset. That all goes into the newsletter. We have, as Deb mentioned, blogs. We have podcasts. We have our own podcast series, too. There's lots of different – We actually have a few different podcast series, ones that I don't manage, but that we also share in the newsletter. Yeah, highly suggest subscribing, if you don't already, we'd love to have you.

[0:44:01] DC: Of course, PRINTING United Alliance produces PRINTING United, the trade show every year. There's that. There's ton of those inkjet summits and wide format summits. I mean, you guys have a ton going on. You're the largest member organization in North America, as far as I'm aware from your PR. You also run the largest trade show in North America, which I don't need PR to tell me that. I've been there. I know. The events are so – That is always, that's another great reason to subscribe to Printing Impressions newsletter, because you get all the information about that and who's coming to the show and what they're showing. Ashley is telling human stories behind all that.

It only took me 10, well, not 10 years. I've been doing this podcast since 2018. I don't do math. That's eight years, or something like that? Is it eight years? Okay. Look at me doing math. Okay. Let's say, I've been trying to get you on the podcast for three years is probably accurate. Thank you so much for finally giving in and joining me. I really appreciate your time. I appreciate the time of everybody who listen to this podcast. Don't forget to connect with Ashley. Everything you need is in the show notes. Until next time, print long and prosper.

[END OF EPISODE]

[0:45:25] DC: Thanks for listening to Podcasts From the Printerverse. Please subscribe, click some stars, and leave us a review. Connect with us through printmediacentr.com, we'd love to hear your feedback on our shows and topics that are of interest for future broadcasts. Until next time, thanks for joining us. Print long and prosper.

[END]

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Ashley Roberts: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ashley-roberts-a9148465/>

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