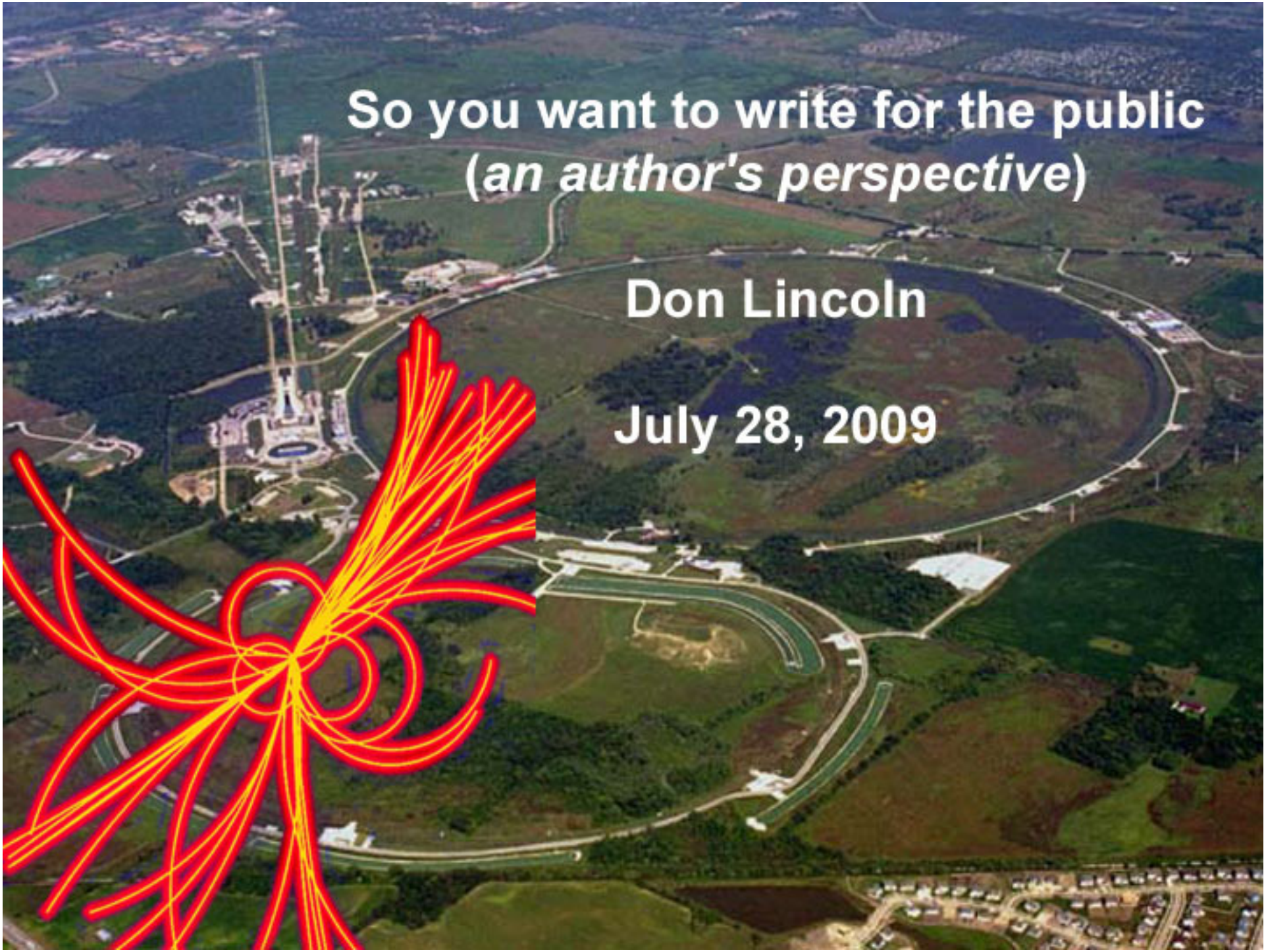
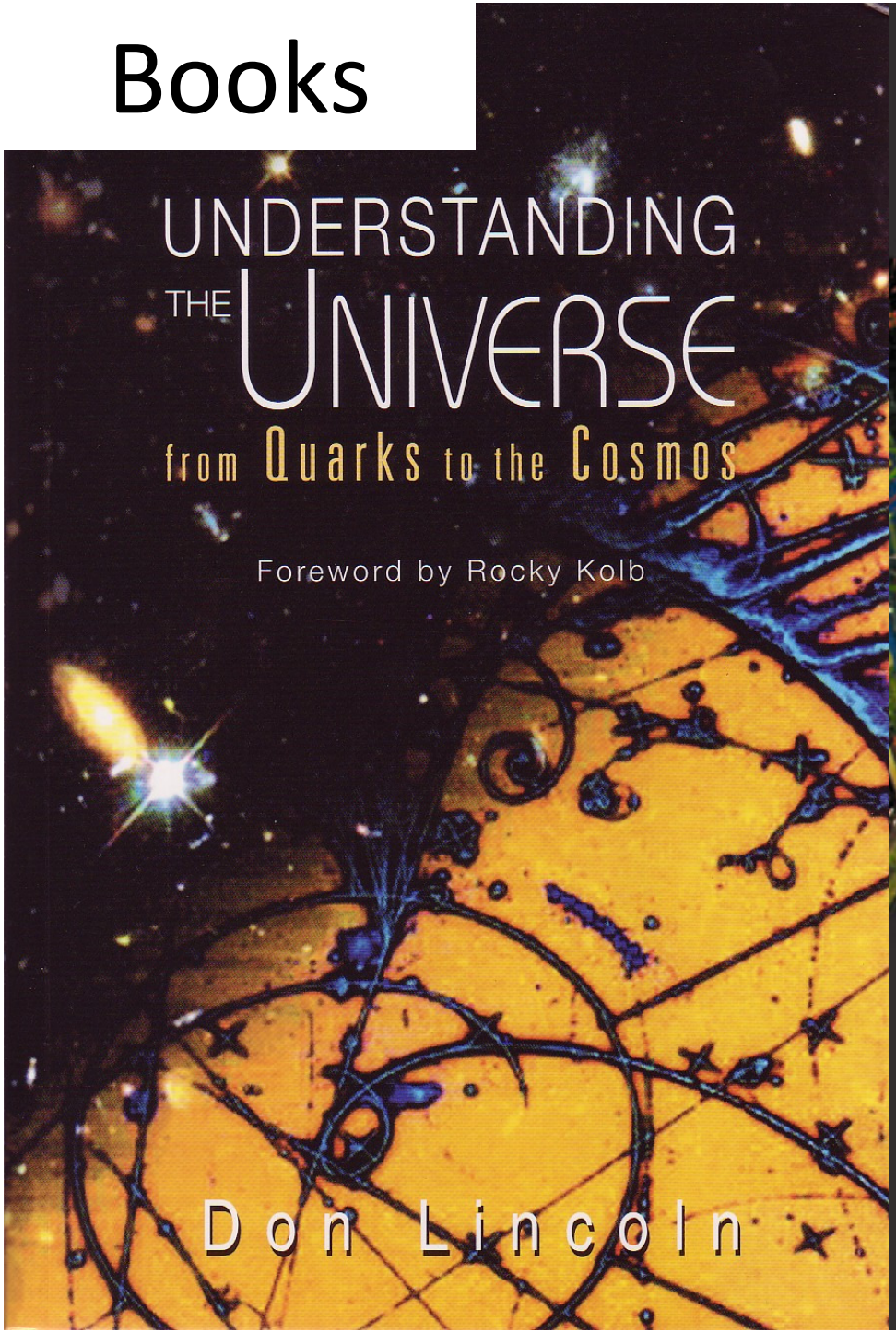

So you want to write for the public
(*an author's perspective*)
Don Lincoln
July 28, 2009

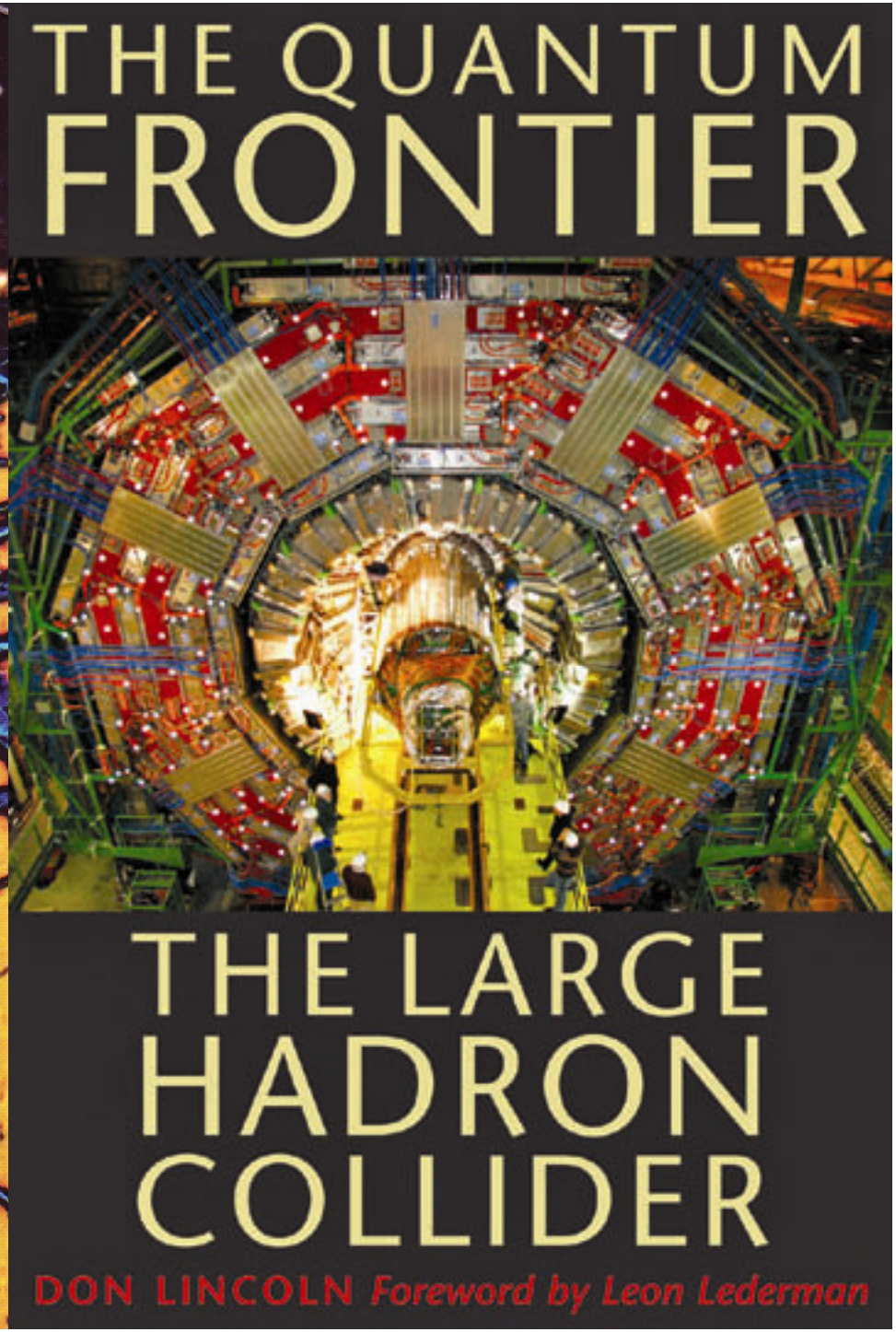
# Don's Efforts [Public Outreach]

- Lots of public lectures (~ 150 – 200?)
  - Often small
- Some local radio
  - Mostly local, some from Fermilab Office of Communication contacts, some from word of mouth [This applies to both above.]
- Writing for a popular audience
  - *Fermilab Today*: DZero Result of the Week
  - *Fermilab Today*: CMS Result of the Month
  - Magazines
  - Books

*Caveat*: This is one author's experience. There is a lot of truth in here, but nothing is universal in this business.

# Books


UNDERSTANDING
THE UNIVERSE
from Quarks to the Cosmos
Foreword by Rocky Kolb
Don Lincoln


THE QUANTUM
FRONTIER
THE LARGE
HADRON
COLLIDER
DON LINCOLN Foreword by Leon Lederman

## Understanding the Universe

- Date: April 2004
- HEP overview (broad)
- Publisher: World Scientific
- Price: $88 hc / $28 pb
- Write time: 5 months
- Sell time: 18 months
- # Rejections agents: 1
- # Rejections publishers: 3
- Sales:
  - 4,000 pb
  - 3,800 book club [print rights]
  - < 1,000 hc
- Reprinted partially in Chinese
- Little advertising

## The Quantum Frontier

- Date: February 2009
- Story of the LHC (focused)
- Publisher: Johns Hopkins
- Price: $25 hc
- Write time: 2 months
- Sell time: 6 months
- # Rejections agents: 2
- # Rejections publishers: 0
- Sales:
  - 4,000 pb to date, second printing already [8,000 total so far].
- German translation in the works
- Some advertising
  - 2 radio shows (Dahl & Rosenberg)
  - 1 Internet web review
  - 1 MSNBC [Alan Boyle]

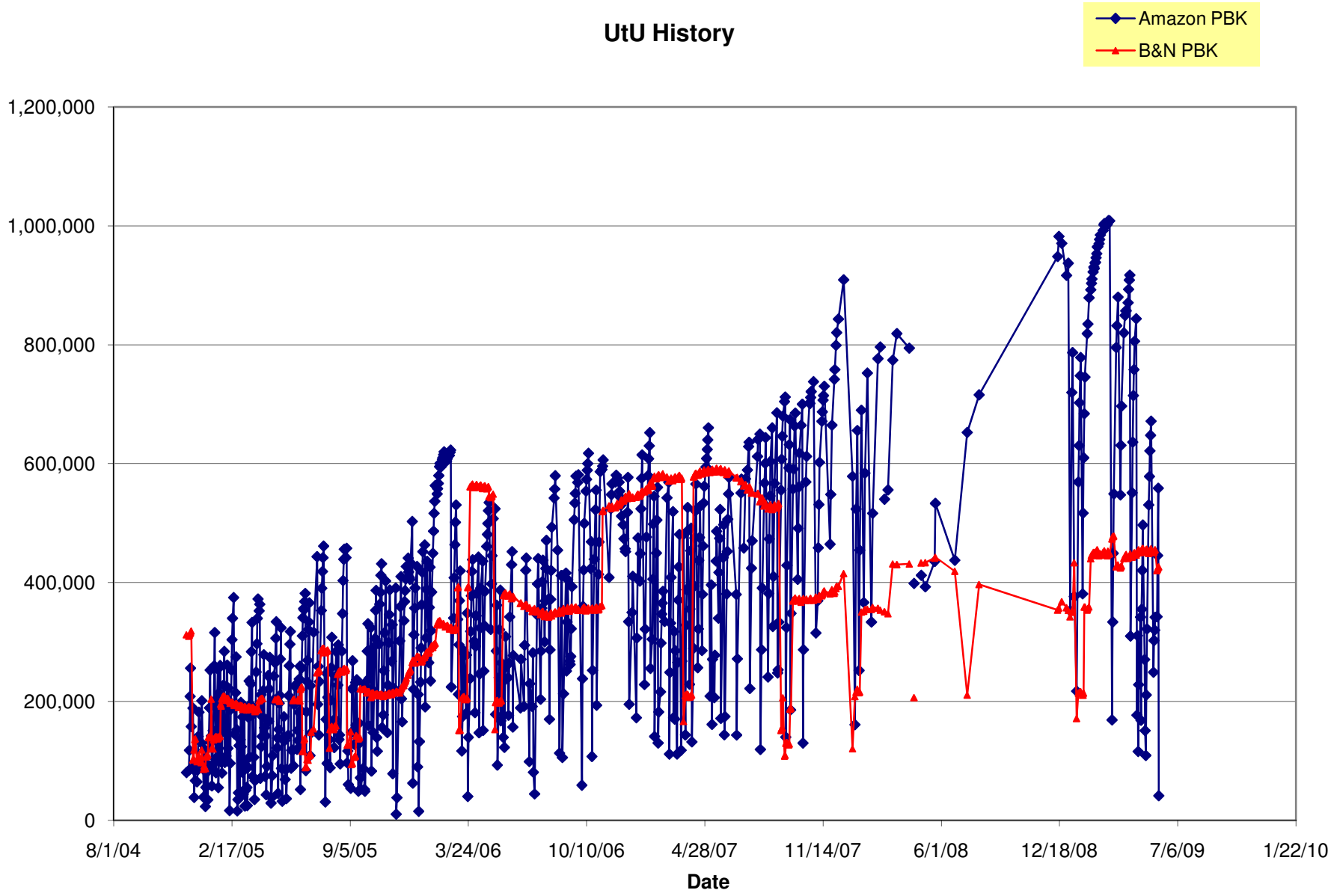
http://www.thequantumfrontier.com

# Book Contract

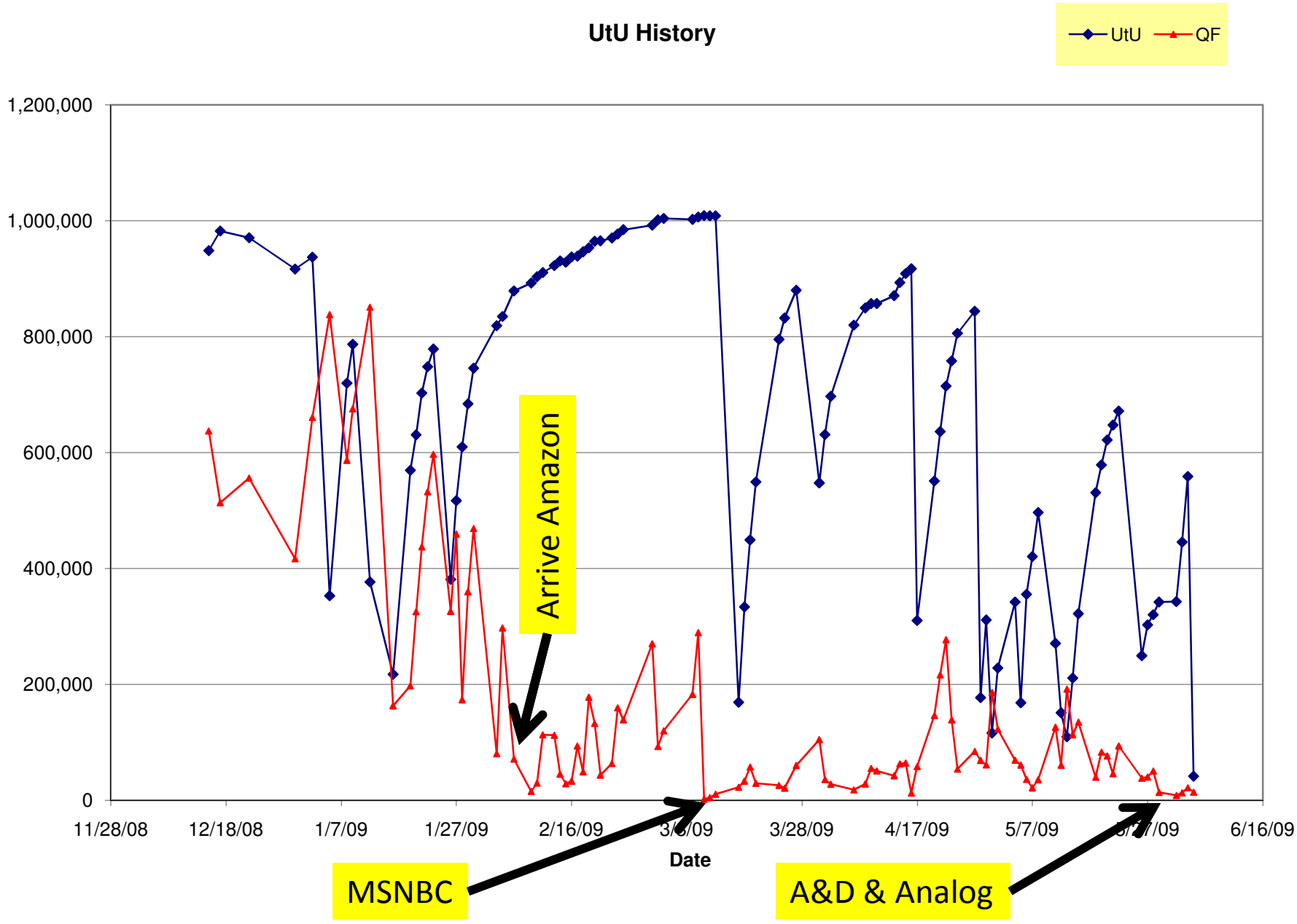
- Varies
  - 6% of cover price for first 1000, 7% afterwards
  - 5% for first 1000, 6.25% for 1000-5000, 7.5% after
- Rates on contract say twice this, but since they charge 50% on the cover price, this is accurate.
- Advances are rare.

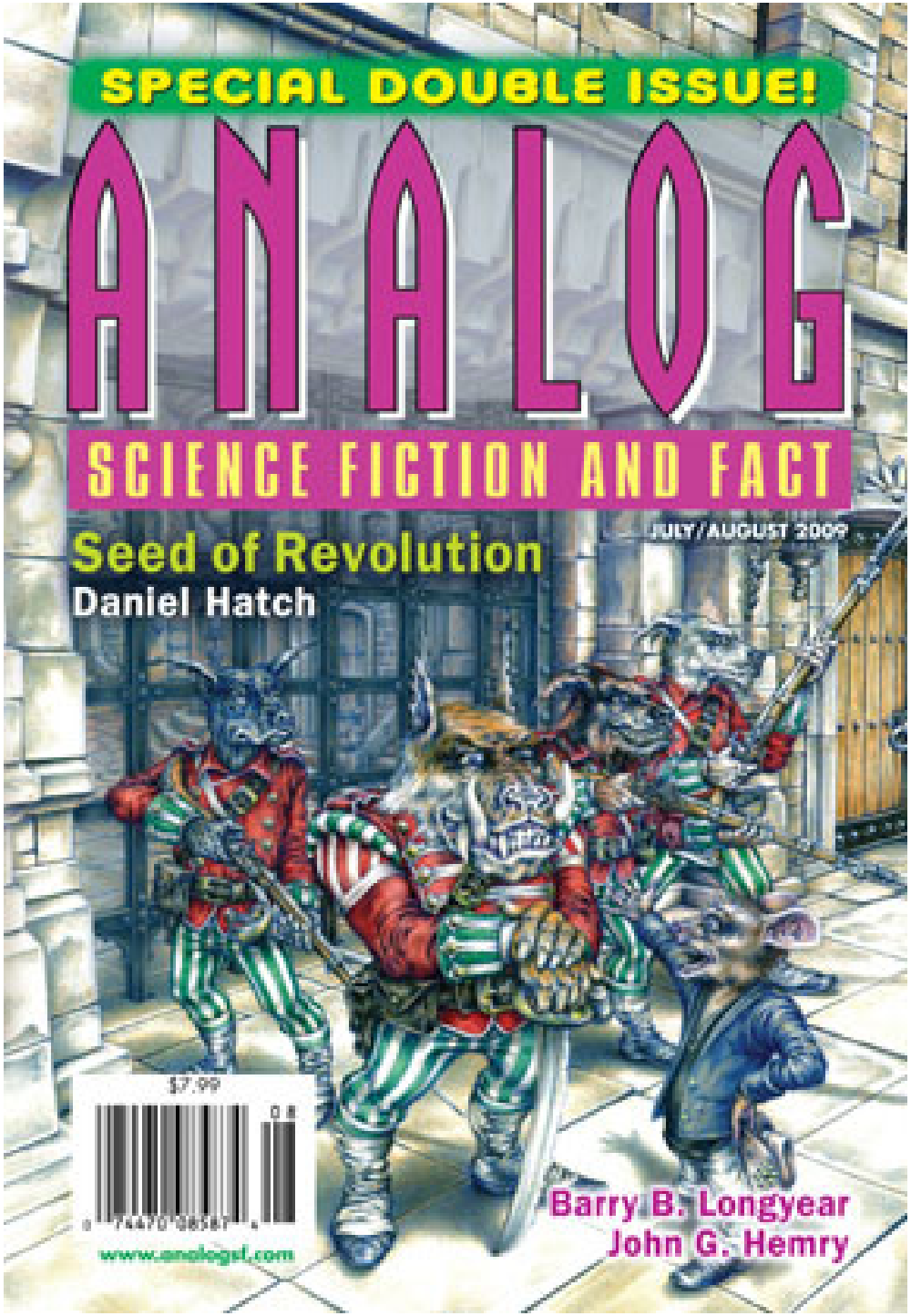
- Agents take 15% of your cut.

# Amazon & Barnes &Noble Sales Rank



# Recent History: Amazon






# Popular Magazines

## Analog

- Date: July/August 2009
- Write time: 2 weeks
- Sell time: 2 months
- # Rejections publishers: 0
- Rewrites: 2
- Sales:
  - 35,000 issues

Science Fact

**The Large Hadron Collider: A New Era**

Dr. Don Lincoln

**A Race for the Ages**

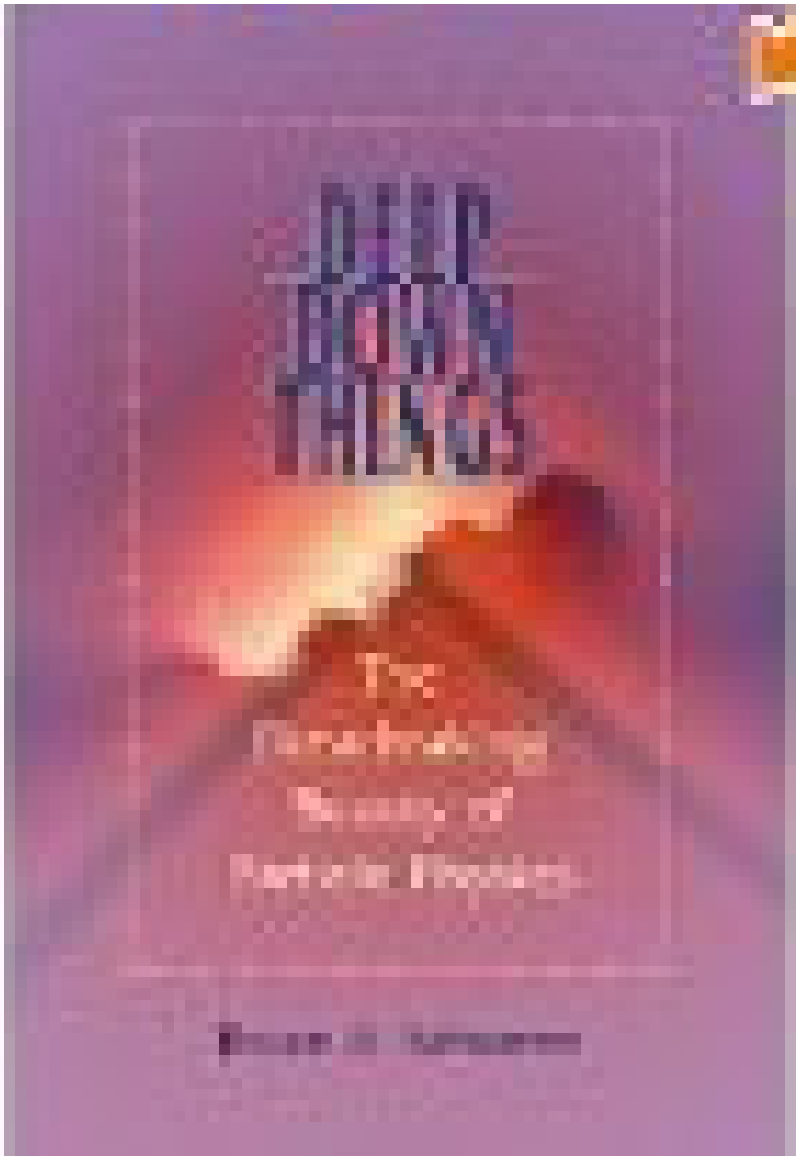
Every year during Memorial Day weekend, millions of Americans tune in their TV set to one of racing's greatest spectacles, the Indianapolis 500. For three grueling hours, racers hurtle their cars around a 2.5-mile-long oval track at speeds routinely exceeding 220 miles per hour. It's a testament to the skill and endurance of the drivers to navigate for so long and at such speeds.

However, no matter the passion of American racing fans, the Indy 500 is small potatoes compared to a new racetrack in Europe, just outside Geneva, Switzerland. No, this new race is not the venerable Le Mans, but rather a scientific one. On a circular track a little over sixteen and a half miles in circumference, subatomic particles travel at speeds so fast that they could complete the entire Indy 500 in a little over two thousandths of a second, far shorter than the blink of an eye. Traveling nearly at the speed of light (186,000 miles per second), beams of protons race for ten hours or so, during which time they travel nearly seven billion miles or about to Neptune and back, with a round trip to Jupiter thrown in for good measure.

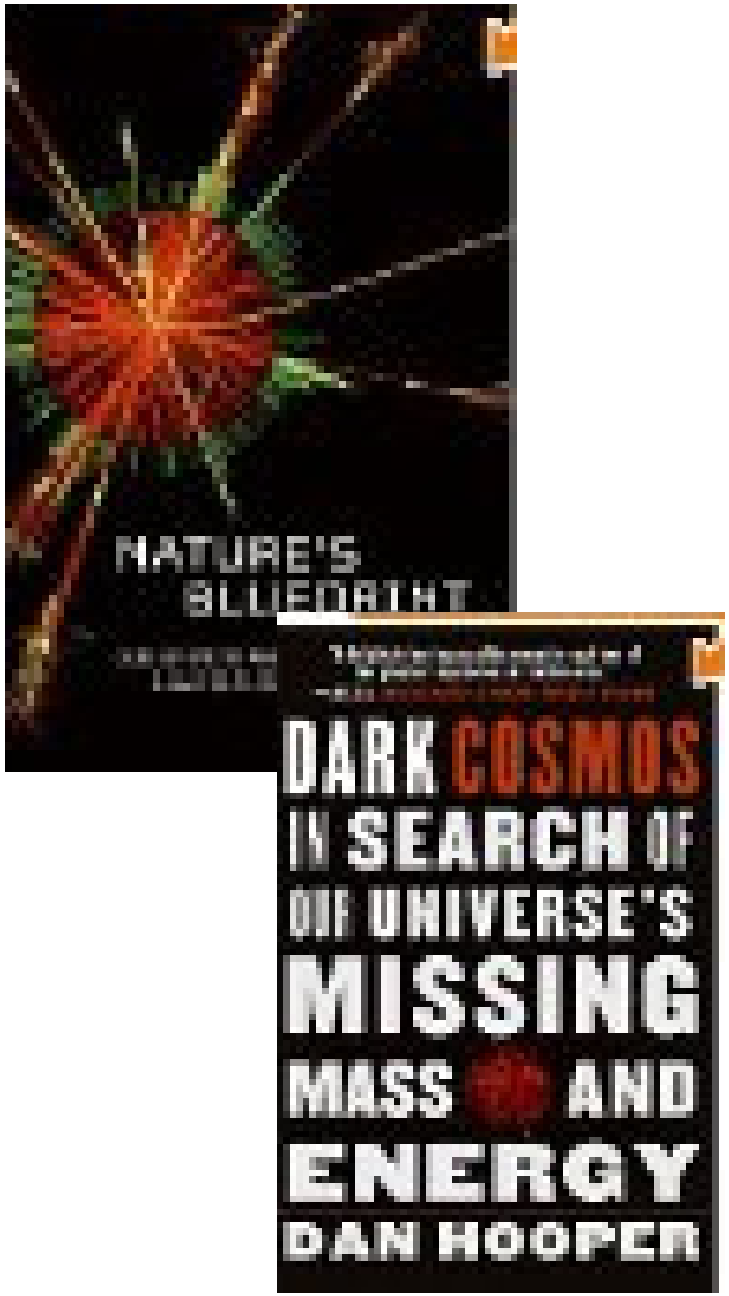
This new "race track" is called the Large Hadron Collider, or LHC. Situated at the premier European particle physics laboratory, called CERN (a French acronym for European Nuclear Research Council), the LHC can accelerate two beams of protons, traveling in opposite directions around the circular accelerator, and collide them head-on at several spots around the ring. These collisions are recorded by gargantuan detectors that can be as big as 150 feet long, 80 feet tall, and weigh as much as twenty-five *million* pounds. The two largest detectors are shown in figure 1.

Particle accelerators have played a role in many science fiction stories, from activating wormholes, to forming powerful weapons, to the ghost-confining proton packs of *Ghost-*

# Bruce Schumm

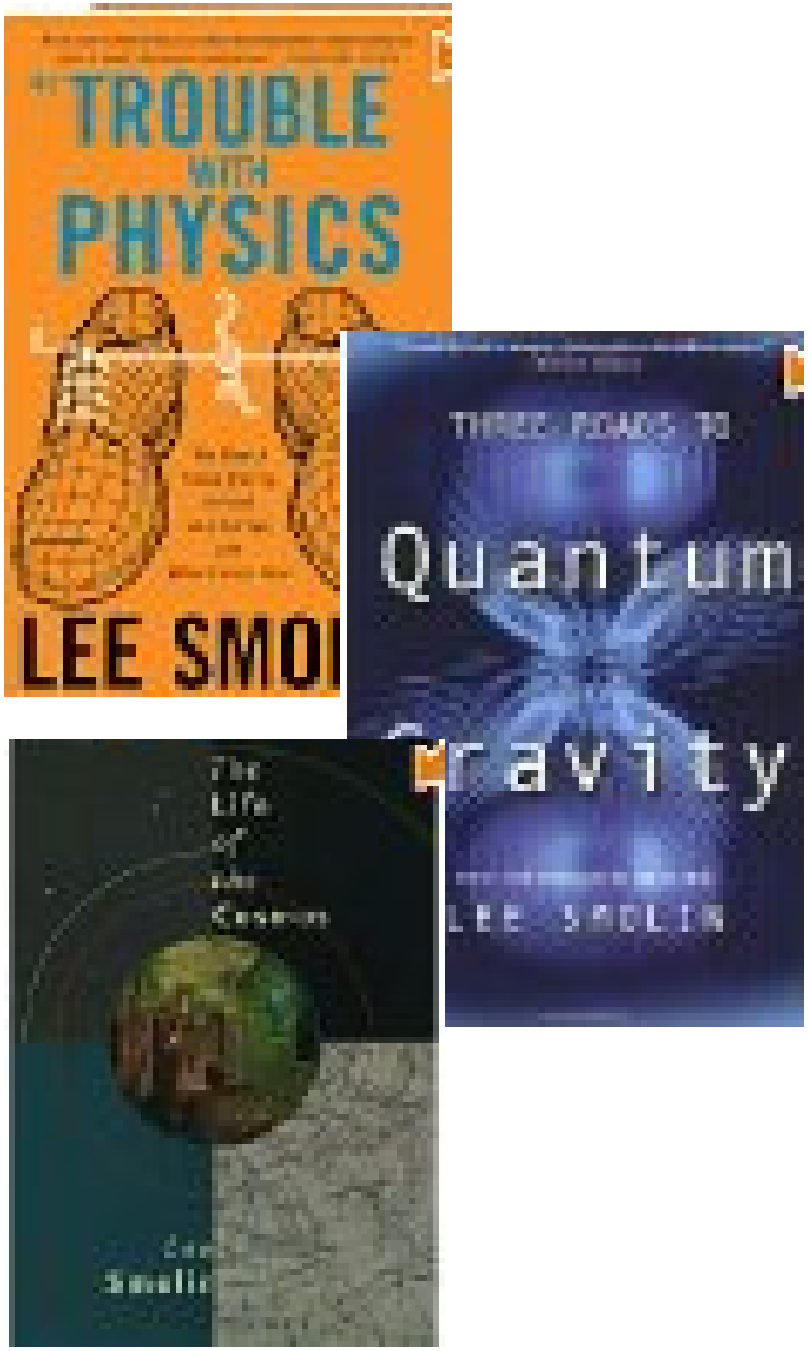



- Write only if you like to
- Decide on the press (academic vs. trade)
  - Academic listens more to the author
  - Trade less so
- Sent the book to one press at a time
  - Wouldn't do that this time.
- Will respond to  queries.




# Dan Hooper

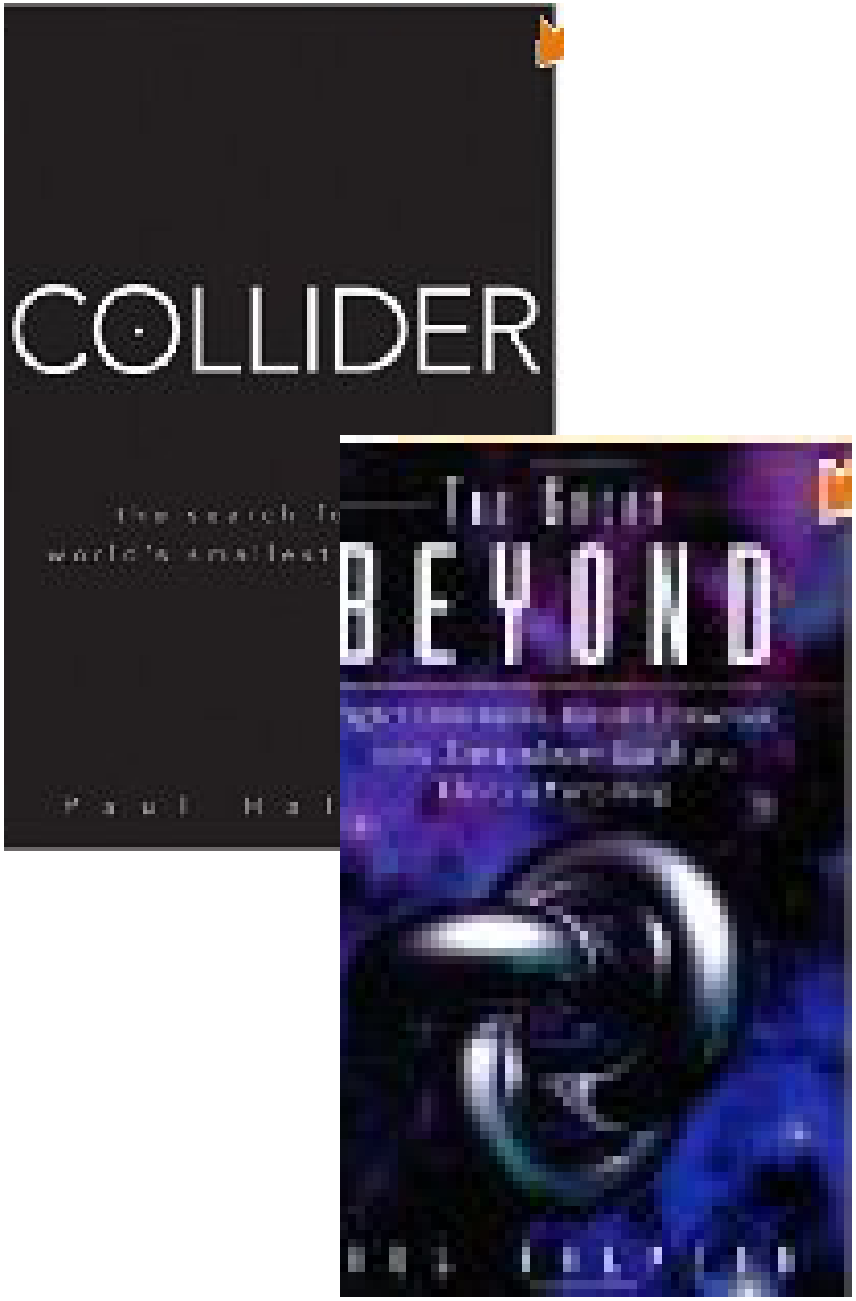
- Find something original
  - No YARB or Schrodinger's cat
- Writing quality is crucial
  - Read other popular science writing.
- Get an agent
  - Only way to a large press
  - Academic press means low distribution




At Ann Arbor today

# Lee Smolin

- Reasons to write
  - Publicize development in science to the public.
  - begin career as a science journalist.
  - To reflect on the state of your field, mainly for other scientists, but so the public can see
- Two questions
  - Does the word need this book?
  - Will it help my career?
- Only “big” books last.
- Will respond to  queries.

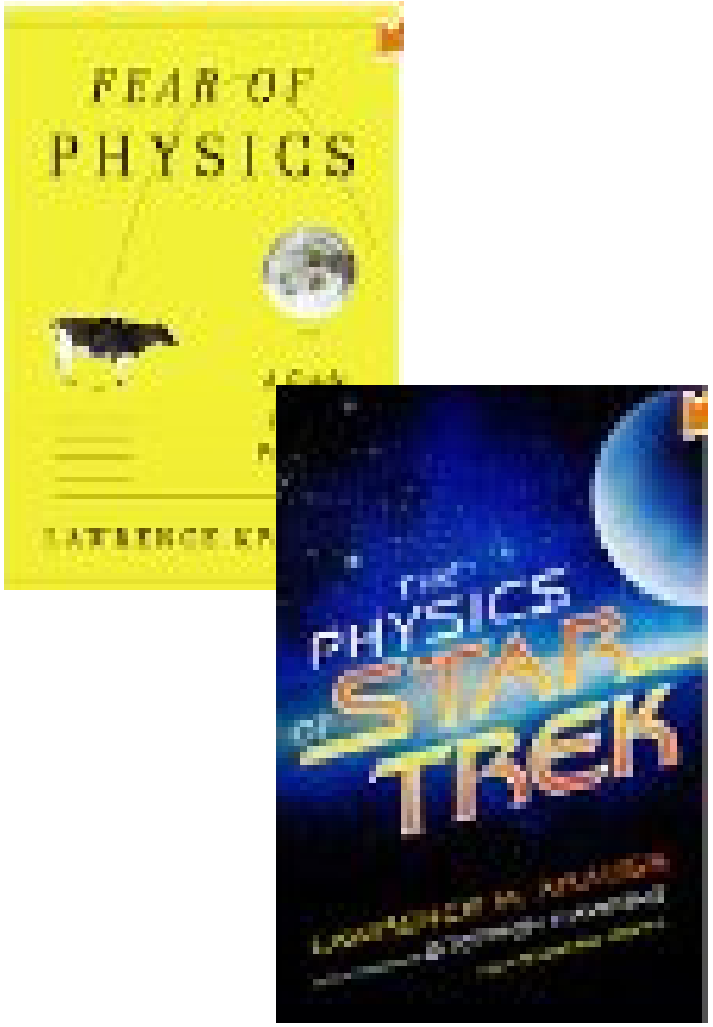



# Paul Halpern

- Decide on audience (technical, general, university students, children, etc.)
- Decide market your book idea to an academic press, a small specialized press or a large press
- For a large press, I would suggest finding a literary agent.
- Send a short query to an agent, who, if interested, would request a longer proposal with a sample chapter(s).
- Avoid agents who charge a reading fee.
- Agent will help refine proposal and market it
- For academic or small presses, many authors work without agents. Then the authors contact editors directly, following a similar process of a query and then a proposal.

And others

- Will respond to queries.




# Lawrence Krauss

- Advice:
  - Don't write books to make money..
    - average dollar return per hour is small.
    - Write books because you really want to and because you think you have something to say.
- The first mistake people make is assuming others are interested in what you have to say. Never assume this.

And others

- Will respond to contacts
  - Very terse

# Advice/Wisdom/Scar Tissue #1

1. Make sure you can actually write.
   a) Get an honest appraisal.
   b) Can you finish what you start?
2. Decide on your audience.
   a) "Scientific American" crowd?
   b) "Don's Mom"?
3. Decide on your topic
   a) Can you say something original?
   b) Does the world need *YARB*?
4. Decide on scope
   a) Broad or narrow focus
5. Do you want to self publish?
   a) I strongly advise "No"
6. Think like a publisher. They are heartless, mercantile SOBs.
   a) Is it timely?
   b) Will the book sell?
   c) What's in it for them?
   d) Like Don Corleone said "It's just business."
7. Do you want an agent?
   a) They take 15%
   b) Good ones don't charge a "reading fee."
   c) Probably only entrée into a "big press."

# Advice/Wisdom/Scar Tissue #2

8. Book proposal
   a) First contact is an email/phone call with “call for interest”
   b) Next is proposal, including:
      i. Synopsis
      ii. Estimate of size, level, number of chapters, number of figures
      iii. Sample chapter or two
   c) Evaluation can take 4-6 months
      i. One press or multiple
      ii. Monthly “follow up” contacts.

9. Surprises
   a) You have little to no say over
      i. Title
      ii. Cover art
      iii. Layout/font
      iv. Release date
      v. Price
   b) Publicity is highly variable between publishers
   c) That book tour where you specify you only want green M&M’s and Chilean glacier mineral water?
      i. Not gonna happen.
   d) That huge advance?
      i. (See c-i)

# Summary

- Writing for the public is personally rewarding and helpful to the field [even if it is not career enhancing for young people.]
- Writing requires real determination. You have to learn to push through the inevitable rejection.
- Writing is not terribly lucrative. You can make a few tens of thousands of dollars per book, spread over 2-3 years. [And that's very good.]
- And that whole fame and groupie thing? Not so much.

# Questions?