

## New Venture

## Smashwords Gambles on DRM-Free

The agreement Smashwords signed with Sourcebooks last month to sell 14 Sourcebooks titles as e-books without DRM protection was the biggest deal yet for the year-old company. "We're a publishing platform, a publisher, an online retailer and a distribution channel," said Mark Coker, Smashwords founder, whose background includes running a public relations company in Los Gatos, Calif., and launching another Internet startup, [www.BestCalls.com](http://www.BestCalls.com).

Smashwords is a free service newly available to publishers, enabling them to upload manuscripts in Microsoft Word file format, which are then automatically converted into nine different DRM-free e-book formats. The e-books are marketed to consumers at a price set by the publisher through Smashwords' Web site ([www.smashwords.com](http://www.smashwords.com)) and through its distributor, Lexcycle and Lexcycle's free Stanza e-reading app. "We'll have additional online distribution outlets in coming months," Coker assured *PW*.

Publishers retain all rights to their books and receive 85% of net proceeds from all book sales. The single expense incurred by Smashwords that is passed on to the publisher is the credit card processing fee.

Coker conceived of Smashwords after failing to find a mainstream publisher for *Boob Tube*, a satirical novel he and his wife,

Lesleyann, had written together and are now marketing on Smashwords. Coker described Smashwords as a "social publishing platform for books."

"Our original mission was to help independent authors get their books out there quickly," he said, explaining that in the past few months Smashwords has expanded from a platform for individual authors to one that supports multiauthor publishers. Each publisher of a minimum of two titles is provided a dedicated "custom-branded online bookstore" page on Smashwords' site, where it can list and profile an unlimited number of titles. More than 2,000 e-books by approximately 1,000 authors are listed, cross-referenced by author, publisher and genre. In addition to Sourcebooks, about 24 publishers have signed up with Smashbooks, with a heavy dose of erotica publishers.

While Coker expects to add more small presses, he doesn't expect to hear from the larger houses. "The biggest hurdle we are facing is that all books with Smashwords are DRM-free," he said. "Most large publishers want their books DRM-protected." Smashwords has had more than a half-million page views each month since launching last year, but Coker acknowledged that only a small fraction of viewers are downloading e-books and most of those are free samples. Still, Coker is optimistic. "Free downloads are the gateway through which a lot of readers discover e-books," Coker said. "We're trying to draw people in, become part of their e-book habit. Repeat customers often convert into paying customers." —C. K.

## GALLEY TALK

## ■ Lucy Kogler, Talking Leaves Books, Buffalo, N.Y.

Cathy Marie Buchanan's *The Day the Falls Stood Still* (Voice, Sept.) is more than just a captivating historical novel about Niagara Falls. It is a highly spiritual tale of family, love, loss, class, early environmentalism and the battles fought to make citizens aware of



A highly spiritual tale.

the natural sacrifices made in the name of progress. Buchanan combines storytelling with reportage of a legendary riverman creating a story as mesmerizing as staring at the river as it plunges over the falls. The book opens in 1915 with 17-year-old Bess at a girls' school, fully believing in God and living a life of privilege. As the story progresses, Bess's beliefs are challenged—a traditional sense of morality morphs into an understanding of a gray area as her knowledge of the river's rhythms and ways forces her to assess the world from a different perspective. Readers who love strong female characters and those who appreciate the vicissitudes of history will relish Buchanan's tale.

to any depiction of an animal being injured, including books and magazines about bullfighting. Furthermore, the law gives judges and juries wide discretion in determining just what "seri-

ous" value is and could lead to regulating speech by balancing the social value of a work against the potential to cause harm.

## B&amp;N Adds Wi-Fi

A week after



## Sweet 16 for 'Stellaluna'

Local author and illustrator Janell Cannon recently visited the Carlsbad City Library (in Carlsbad, Calif.), to sign copies of her picture book, *Stellaluna* (Harcourt Children's), celebrating its 16th anniversary. The signing took place in conjunction with two performances of Tears of Joy Theatre's adaptation of the book. Copies of the book were sold by Mysterious Galaxy Books (in San Diego) at the event. Cannon is pictured here with Patrick Heffernan of Mysterious Galaxy.

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