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CONSPIRACY 365



THE COUNTDOWN HAS BEGUN...
12 Books. 12 Months.



EDC PUBLISHING

KANE/MILLER CONSPIRES TO BUILD A HIT

*Publication of new series is biggest project ever for new parent company EDC
by Jim Milliot -- Publishers Weekly, 10/19/2009*

Educational Development Corp. chairman Randall White was pretty sure he had uncovered a gem of a small company when he acquired Kane/Miller Book Publishers last December, but the purchase has worked out even better than he thought. With the holiday season still to come, revenue at Kane/Miller in 2009 has already topped that of all of 2008, according to White. "It's been terrific," White said of the purchase, which involved \$125,000 in cash plus a \$705,000 payment to liquidate a Kane/Miller line of credit and notes to shareholders.

After the deal closed, White moved the Kane/Miller back-office and sales and marketing operations to EDC's Tulsa, Okla., headquarters, leaving editorial in the hands of publisher Kira Lynn, who runs Kane/Miller's San Diego, Calif., office. White had been looking to diversify EDC's product line, which features the U.K.-produced Usborne titles, for some time, and the addition of Kane/Miller's titles to the Usborne offerings was a good fit, with no overlap with the Usborne titles. Up until the EDC purchase, Kane/Miller was best known for publishing U.S. editions of foreign picture books (and more recently, a few novels). While that still remains a major focus, the company, with EDC's financial backing, is branching out, and the imprint is heading up what "could be the biggest thing we've ever done," White said.

At this year's Bologna Book Fair, Lynn acquired U.S. rights from Scholastic Australia to a new YA series by Gabrielle Lord, a bestselling Australian author of adult crime novels. The new series, aimed at ages 11–15, is called *Conspiracy 365*; in addition to being published by Scholastic in Australia, it is being released in a number of major markets, including the U.K. (Hodder), Germany (Random House) and France (Hachette). Lynn said she was able to land the series for Kane/Miller because of the close relationship she had developed with Scholastic Australia working on other projects. The first book (*Conspiracy 365: January*) will be released worldwide on January 1, and a book a month will be published throughout 2010.

The main character is 15-year-old Callum Ormond, who, following the mysterious death of his father, is told that he must find a way to stay alive for the next 365 days. Lynn calls *Conspiracy 365* a cross between *The Da Vinci Code* and *24*, since the story is told in real time, and the books include codes and clues to figure out the mystery about who wants Callum dead. The pages are also numbered backwards, beginning with 192 and working down to 0 with each book ending with a cliffhanger.

Unlike some new YA titles that marry print with digital components, all the clues readers need to unravel the mystery are found in the books. Randall White's son Craig, v-p of IT at EDC, is leading the digital marketing efforts now required to publish for the YA audience. These include Facebook and Twitter accounts plus a dedicated Web site, conspiracy365us.com. The Web site's features include a prologue to the first book, "which lays the groundwork for the story," Craig White said, plus trailers and a clock counting down the days to the release of the first title. More traditional marketing efforts include trade advertising and store counter displays designed to accommodate new books as the series builds over the year.

The series has generated a good response to date from retailers and wholesalers, but EDC is being conservative with the first printing, set at 20,000 copies. "We can do a quick turnaround if we need to," Craig White said. "I'd be disappointed if we only sold 20,000. I expect to do a lot more than that." The unjacketed hardcover will be \$10.99, a price Lynn believes will make it easier for teens and their parents to buy new installments in the series all year. Lynn said Kane/Miller is exploring ways to encourage booksellers to keep all the books in stock for the full year. Retailers are the primary sales channel for *Conspiracy*, but EDC will be selling the book through its home party network as well.

In talking up the book to accounts, Randall White said he was struck by one remark from a wholesaler who liked the story but also that *Conspiracy* "is not another vampire book."

