

Trend Spotting

Keeping abreast of change is hard enough these days without trying to predict the future. However, now that we've begun 2010, it seems a good time to get a snapshot of what's going on and what trends we may be seeing. The following are from discussions with industry buyers in the library, book club, book fair and independent bookstore arenas on what they're watching.

Publishers & Booksellers:

- Children's books are doing better than most other categories
- Cooperative marketing is growing among booksellers and other neighborhood businesses who are promoting Main Street and "buy local" initiatives
- Bookstores are diversifying the type of products they carry and services they offer
- Finding ways to respond quickly to change is one of our biggest challenges
- Many publishers are reducing the number of books they produce and the amount of copies they're printing
- New distribution options are being explored (including selling direct to consumers, non-returnable, on consignment, and via print-on-demand and electronically)
- Cost is a major factor, so there are fewer novelty books and expensive formats, like pop-ups and interactive books being produced unless the publisher knows they'll sell

Genres & Formats:

- Demand for fantasy is softening with notable exceptions such as J.K. Rowling & Suzanne Collins
- Vampire & werewolf trends are still very big, but may not last much longer
- Classics are popular as are inspirational books
- There's a shift back to basics
- Ereaders, like the Kindle, Sony Reader and iPad are expected to have a big impact on the market

Market Demands:

- Consumers are looking for books that offer high quality at a good price

- People want the option to buy online and in multiple formats (ebooks, audio, etc.)
- Readers have been empowered by the Internet to find books they're interested in and have more choices of where to buy. Good customer service is necessary to attract and retain consumers

Authors & Illustrators:

- There's a lot of professional talent (editors, book designers, marketers) available to self-published authors and small publishers who want to bring a quality product to market
- Groups of authors and illustrators are working together to take advantage of opportunities in sales, promotion and marketing
- Networking and marketing are critical and authors and illustrators need to be proactive to have their books succeed
- Developing a good author website and updating it frequently helps keep kids, teachers, librarians, parents and others connected to an author's work
- Maintaining close relationships with fans promotes brand loyalty

Finally:

- Don't worry too much about today's trends and forecasts, since the book you're working on is likely to have different challenges and new opportunities when the time comes for it to be published. Just be prepared to try. Meanwhile, rest up, we expect there will be a lot to do! 3:4/10