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Economy sharpens focus at FBF

Charlotte Williams

Delegates have reported an "engaged" mood at Frankfurt Book Fair 2011, with tough economic conditions fuelling a more focused approach to the fair, plus a flurry of indie business acquisitions.

FBF has seen O'Brien Press acquiring Brandon Books, Oxbow Books being bought by Casemate, and SelfMadeHero being snapped up by Abrams, with publishers observing that tough market conditions make change more essential.

Michael O'Brien said: "If times are really good, [change] doesn't make that much difference, but if you don't do it in a hard time, then it's bye-bye. There's a buzz from it. Publishing companies can get quite complacent."

Meanwhile, leading publishers and industry figures have described the mood as "engaged" and pinpointed

progress made in discussions around digital.

Random House Group deputy c.e.o. Ian Hudson said: "The mood is very positive, with everyone doing quite a lot of business. There have been a few observations that perhaps not so many people from the US are here. I have found it remarkable that the global issues haven't been discussed more... [but] I think we are a very resilient industry."

RH digital editor Dan Franklin added: "What we're seeing now on the digital side is progress and it's a really healthy competitive atmosphere." Natural History Museum Press head of publishing Colin Ziegler said talk about digital colour books had increased: "Everyone is starting to talk about the Kindle Fire."

Penguin UK c.e.o. Tom Weldon pointed to speculation about digital sales as a major talking point. Weldon

said: "It's really busy. There are so many different issues that the mood is 'engaged', I would say. The main talking points have been 'How big will e-book sales be next year?' and 'Will it be a double-dip recession?'. Publishers are always relentlessly optimistic."

Publishing Scotland chief executive Marion Sinclair described the atmosphere as "brusque and business-like", with Egmont group sales director Gillian Laskier saying: "The people who have come to the fair have come to do business."

The downside of digital was also on display, with BlackBerry's server collapse and the lack of wi-fi in Hall 8 meaning some could not communicate with colleagues. Weldon said: "It's the longest I've been out of touch in my life and I'm quite jittery, though I'm sure the people in the office are delighted."



ANDREW WYLIE

50% digital royalty rate will be the norm—page 3



KATE HARRIS

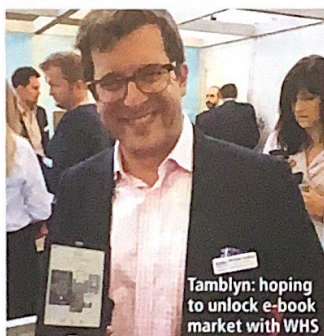
OUP m.d. Kate Harris talks education and children's—page 13

Kobo/WHS e-reader to open up British e-book market

E-book retailer Kobo said it is hoping its partnership with British retailer W H Smith will unlock the e-book reading market for the 90% of British consumers yet to use a device.

Michael Tamblyn, executive vice-president for content, sales and merchandising, told *The Bookseller Daily* it has been in discussions with WHS for several months about bringing Kobo devices, including its Touch wi-fi e-reader, to WHS' portfolio of high street and travel stores.

Tamblyn said: "British customers haven't really had the choice about digital reading experiences. [What we have done is] partnered with a retailer that is known and loved and



Tamblyn: hoping to unlock e-book market with WHS

certainly one of the most trusted names in the high street, and combining that with our digital reading experience that's on a par with any other."

The touch device was available from W H Smith's website from yesterday, priced £109.99. Tamblyn said he is excited about selling the device ahead of the Christmas season and singled out WHS' travel stores in airports and railway stations as a key area that will drive sales.

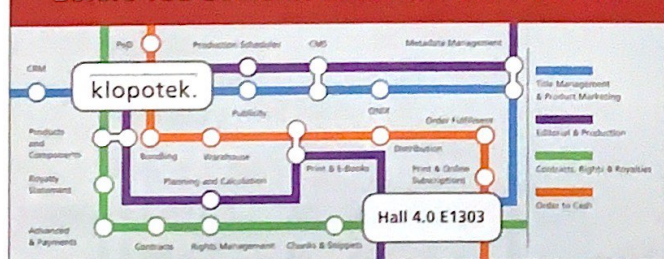
He said: "Wi-fi and touch provides that perfect intersection to keep the price low and it will be fantastic for someone picking up the device for the first time. Around 90% of British consumers have probably never picked up a e-reader so that's why the instore WHS offer will be so compelling."



BLACKBERRY FOOL

Daisy Frost shows how to get a million plus pre-empt—page 19

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