



AUSTRALIA

WHAT'S UP DOWN UNDER

Kevin Engel, international Christian publishing consultant (KevinEngel@compuserve.com), and InterLit staffer, Jolene Hruza, look at the Australian market.

Every publisher dreams of a market where 100 percent of the people are voracious readers and book buyers. Of all the nations of the world, New Zealand has the highest percentage of book buyers. Australia is a close second. A third of all Australians read books daily.

Australia's population has greater buying power than most of its nearest neighbors. Total retail book sales are A\$1 billion per year (approximately US\$500 million). Of these sales, A\$624 million are derived from the sale of Australian books. Book sales in this region deserve a closer look.

Sales and distribution issues

Most Australians live in densely populated coastal cities. Distribution between these cities is successful but distributors have difficulty reaching stores and individuals living in rural areas.

Christian retailers have traditionally spent very little on marketing. They have been content to wait for customers to come to them. Despite their dedi-

cation to ministry, most Christian booksellers have needed to improve customer service and sales skills. In a recent article in *Publisher's Weekly*, one Australian publisher said, "Understanding that customers need to have things made easier will help the business."

Christian booksellers in Australia are learning to accommodate their customers. In-store promotions for music and author signings are heightening awareness of Christian products and the actual location of retail outlets. Brighter shops and colorful displays are creating an inviting atmosphere for customers.

More importantly, more retailers are accepting alternative forms of payment. Credit cards are used extensively. Retailers are increasingly using catalogs, taking advantage of e-mail distribution lists, and using web sites to facilitate communication with potential customers.

A diverse population

Australia is isolated by its location in the Indian

and Pacific oceans yet its population is diverse in its cultural composition. In 1999, 24 percent of the population, over 19 million at that time, were born outside of Australia. Of these non-native residents, 39 percent were from approximately 130 non-English speaking countries, including Italy, the former Yugoslav republics, Greece, Netherlands, Germany, China, Vietnam, Philippines, Lebanon, and India. A further 27 percent of the Australian population has at least one parent born overseas.

This diverse cultural population means that many newspapers and magazines are published in languages other than English. Around 90 non-English publications are issued on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. More booksellers are seeking to fill the growing demand for non-English titles.

Foreign competition

The recent introduction of a national goods and services tax raised book prices by an average of 10 percent. Last year,

the Australian government earned over A\$80 million in book taxes alone. In addition, the long-standing decline of the Australian dollar makes imports more expensive. Despite this, customers still rush to buy foreign products.

Wholesale book trade and music industries are dominated by titles from the United States and the United Kingdom. The day after Oprah Winfrey, a U.S. talk show host, chose Andre Dubus III's *House of Sand and Fog* as a selection for her book club, over 15,000 copies of the book were sold in Australia.

Foreign influence and global media can be overwhelming, yet local publishers seem to be doing very little to counteract the dominance of foreign titles. Those publishers who are successful in establishing a national publishing house are often swallowed up by multinational companies.

Most wholesalers in Australia act as agents for overseas publishers. Even so, Australia's potential as a market for the products of Christian publishers of

non-English materials has not been fully realized. For example, one very large segment of Australia's population is Chinese, more Chinese Christian materials could be made available in the country.

Promoting national publishing

Currently, booksellers and publishers are at work on a national campaign, titled "Books Alive," to increase awareness of reading and books among Australians. Though modeled after foreign programs in the U.S. and Europe, this campaign

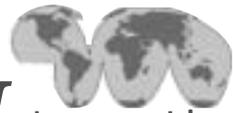
could prove beneficial for the entire book industry in Australia if it succeeds in reaching Australia's vast ethnic populations.

Some local Christian publishers are growing. Openbook Publishers, Acorn Press, Unichurch Books, St. Matthias Press, Aquila Press, and many others are targeting the evangelical market.

In the past, most Christians were happy to read European and American theological books. As the population mix has changed, people want an Australian expression of

theology. Australian Christian authors who were previously published overseas now desire to have their works first published in Australia. Every year over 100,000 new English titles are published worldwide. Over 6,000 are Australian titles.

More promotion is needed for new and existing national music and titles to keep up with the rapid and dramatic changes in the demographics of the Australian population.v



International
PUBLISHING EVENTS

March 14-15, 2002
ECPA Christian Editor Conference & International Rights Forum, Nashville, TN USA
www.ecpa.org

March 17-19, 2002
London Book Fair
London, United Kingdom
www.lbf-virtual.com

March 22-27, 2002
Salon du Livre: Paris Book Fair
Paris, France
salondulivre.reed-oip.fr

April 3-6, 2002
Media Associates International
Writer's Workshop
Budapest, Hungary
www.littword.org

April 10-13, 2002
Bologna Children's Book Fair,
Bologna, Italy
www.bolognafiere.it

April 16-May 7, 2002
International Book Fair
Buenos Aires, Argentina
www.el-libro.com.ar

April 19-22, 2002
Tokyo International Book Fair,
Tokyo, Japan
www.reedexpo.co.jp/tibf

April 24-May 6, 2002
International Book Fair
Bogotá, Colombia
www.feriadellibro.com

April 25-May 5, 2002
Bienal Internacional do Livro
São Paulo, Brasil
www.bienaldolivro.com.br

April 27-May 1, 2002
Think Global Seminar, Evangelical
Christian Publishers Association
Co. Springs, CO USA
www.ecpa.org

May 5-16, 2002
Publishing for Children
International Christian Publishing
Institute, Co. Springs, CO USA
www.ccmi.org



KENYA Successful Launch

David Waweru (dwaweru@bcsl.org), director of Cana Publishing, describes its first event in Nairobi, Kenya.

Books, African music, and food were a perfect mix when Cana Publishing, a division of Bookprint Creative Services in Nairobi, Kenya, launched its first six titles on September 27, 2001.

Strong in the Storms chronicles the life of Rev. Dr. Manasses Kuria, retired Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Kenya. *Voices of Freedom*, by Felix Kiruthu, contains independence speeches and biographies of some of Africa's finest statesmen. Other releases were Cook reprints: *Lord, Change Me!*, by Evelyn Christensen; *Be A People Person* and *Be All You Can Be!*, both by John Maxwell; and *Healing For Damaged Emotions*, by David Seamands. Cana Publishing will release more titles in April 2002.



Rev. Dr. Manasses Kuria (seated) autographs Strong in the Storms for guests.

Over 150 invited guests attended the first Cana Publishing open house. The brief and crisp program enabled guests to socialize and to review and purchase the books.

Guests included leading clergy, members of parliament, diplomats, academics, publishers, booksellers and journalists. Contacts with the media proved fruitful.

A leading daily newspaper reviewed two titles within three weeks of the launch. News of the event aired on radio and television. Also, the two leading Sunday newspapers carried in-depth feature stories on Cana Publishing.

In a country where 90 percent of new businesses fail in the first year, Bookprint Creative Services and Cana Publishing are already a success. The launch came only two years after their entry in business. Cana Publishing wants to develop, publish and promote excellent socially and culturally appropriate books to bring hope and social transformation to Africa.v