


Marci Crossan

From: PW NewsLine [PWNewsLine@email.publishersweekly.com]
Sent: March 31, 2004 5:54 PM
To: MEDIA@ABEBOOKS.COM
Subject: PW Newsline for Wednesday, March 31, 2004



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Clarke Lighting a Fire--Or Maybe an Ember

The *NY Times* smartly moved up its April 11 review of *Against All Enemies* and Steve Coll's *Ghost Wars*, two titles benefiting from 9/11 Commission exposure, by posting the review on its site last Monday.

But not all publishers are reacting with newfound eagerness when it comes to their Bush-on-terrorism titles. In fact, in many cases, the timeliness of events--and the rapidity of new developments--is forcing them to move books back.

Mark Crispin Miller's polemic *Cruel & Unusual: Bush/Cheney's New World Order*, from Norton, is getting pushed back from this month to August. His publicist, outside hire Rob Nissen, says that "Mark wanted to make some changes and updates to the manuscript."

Crown's *The Republican Noise Machine* from David Brock is also getting pushed back, though only by a week, to May 25, also for manuscript reasons. Steve Ross says the house considered moving it up in the wake

of Clarke-mania but "decided it wasn't in the best overall interest of the book." The title will, however, benefit from a new initiative that Brock will be announcing along the lines of Progress Media, says Ross. (Crown is wearing its liberal hat at that end of May, choosing to release then the paperback edition of David Corn's *The Lies of George W. Bush*, with, as it promises, "new lies.") And Doubleday has pushed back its 100-copy-printing of James Banford's *Pretext for War: Iraq and the Abuse of America's Intelligence Agencies*, originally scheduled for middle-of-May, to June 29

One title spinning around to catch some Clarke coattails: Penguin Press' *Ghost Wars*. "The book that has the 9/11 commission asking questions," reads an ad in today's Times, which goes on to quote an exchange between Samuel Berger and Thomas Kean, with Kean saying, "It confirms a lot of what we're finding out in this investigation. I'd recommend it." The book moves up to #10 on the upcoming Times bestseller list. Also on the quick-reaction front, Carroll & Graf has already moved up Joseph Wilson's book by a few weeks, to April. As Clarke and others have been urging, timing isn't always critical--just very helpful.-- Steven Zeitchik, with reporting by Charlotte Abbott

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Media Synergy: What's Wrong With A 60-Minute Scoop

The *Baltimore Sun* **beat us to the punch today**, tracking the major book-related features on *60 Minutes* over the last two years. (Five of six, including pre-pub scoops from Suskind and Clarke, come from corporate relative S&S, and according to Lloyd Grove in the *News*, so will an upcoming one from Woodward.)

The paper simply called for the show's disclosure of the corporate connection, but that seemed beside the point. Certainly there are instances where disclosure cures all evils. But the issue here goes beyond what the public should know about media ownership to why Clarke and so many other S&S titles frequently, and almost exclusively, get extended *60 Minutes* spots, potentially displacing features on non-Viacom books.

Some readers have written in to say that this is simply synergy in action. But the argument doesn't hold. Synergy, as conventionally practiced by Disney's Hyperion and others, is using the same characters (typically fictional) across different platforms to reinforce interest. It's not an independent news source repeatedly, and often preemptively, taking its own authors over all others.

As an executive at one rival house put it today, "For years, *60 Minutes* was a program you'd avoid, because they wouldn't make reference to the book and instead make it seem as though it was their own reporting. You'd be out a book spot. But lately it seems like there's an administrative sea-change. There's a lot of book reporting--except now all the books comes from its corporate sister."

To be fair to S&S, they have done a lot of timely political books of late, and no one questions the news value of these segments; it wasn't like you saw them and wondered how they got on the air. (In fact, another potentially newsmaking title, Scribner's *House of Bush, House of Saud*, didn't get a spot.) The house--S&S, not Saud--has also managed its embargoes well, no easy feat these days. And taken at face value, Martha Levin's statement yesterday that Clarke was offered equally to other newsmagazines would argue against any preferential treatment or arrangement.

But *60 Minutes*, as an independent news organization, holds itself to a particular standard of journalism (Michael Jackson notwithstanding), thus making it especially problematic that they would cherrypick books that also happen to help their bottom line. That remains true no matter whose idea it was--or even if it wasn't anyone's at all.--Steven Zeitchik

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All About Abe: A Used Site's Ambitions

More signs of growth--and the prospect for growth--in used books, as Abebooks reports a 30% increase in sales in 2003. It also says that the value of the books sold on its various sites-hit \$100 million last year. (Several weeks ago, Alibris reported a sales increase of 46% in 2003.)

Abebooks says it will up its commissions on used books, from 5% to 8%. The monthly listing fee that varies according to number of copies remains. The site is also planning to offer new titles. Spokesperson Marci Crossan says that while the Internet "has been brilliant for the sale of used and rare books, the marketplace is telling us there is room for new books." A BEA launch is being planned. Although Abebooks' initial plan called for selling titles from only small publishers, interest has been greater than anticipated, Crossan said, the company is talking to publishers of various sizes.

Crossan also said that Abebooks is starting to benefit from the decision by eBay to close its Half.com site, which sells used textbooks, in July. "We're seeing a tide of booksellers coming over to sell their used and new textbooks."--Jim Milliot

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AAP: Past Sales Were High; Present Growth Is Modest

The AAP released its numbers for the end of the year, estimating that total book industry sales rose 4.6% in 2003, to an estimated \$23.4 billion.

The 2003 figures were compiled by a new firm, Management Practice., and they re-state industry sales beginning with 1997. Merrick Payne, Management Practice principal, said AAP members felt that while the growth rates in recent years have been right, the "platform" was too high. To correct the figures, total sales in 1997 were lowered from \$21.6 billion to \$17.2 billion.

According to estimates, trade sales rose 1.2% in 2003, to \$5.06 billion. The increase in the segment was due entirely to the juvenile hardcover segment, which reported a 28.6% gain in 2003, to \$698 million, driven by the sale of Harry Potter/ All other trade segments were down in the year with the juvenile paperback segment showing the biggest decline at 5.2%. Adult hardcover sales fell 2.4%, to \$2.45 billion, while trade

paperback sales slipped 0.6%, to \$1.46 billion.--Jim Milliot

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JOB OF THE DAY

We've had 18 new jobs posted in the last week! Here's one of the 52 positions currently listed on PW JobZone:

PROJECT MANAGER, DAILY LIFE ONLINE

Greenwood Publishing Group
Westport, Connecticut

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About PW NewsLine

Editor: Steven Zeitchik (**szeitchik@reedbusiness.com** or 646-746-6459)

Executive Editor: Jim Milliot (**jmilliot@reedbusiness.com** or 646-746-6867)

For advertising inquiries: Joe Murray (Classified/Media Services Manager)
(**jomurray@reedbusiness.com** or 646-746-7059)

Patricia Fiore (N.Y., N.J., ME, NH, and VT) (**pfiore@reedbusiness.com**)
or

646-746-6809)

Roy Kops (West Coast) (rkops@reedbusiness.com or 650-369-0484)

Matt Hurley (Midwest/South) (pubwkly@aol.com or 630-759-7136)

Rob Wardlaw (N.Y., PA., MD., Del., MA., and CT)

(rwardlaw@reedbusiness.com or 646-746-6795)

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