

SHAKING IT UP

A publisher with a new approach topped our fast-growing list

By JIM MILLIOT, WITH CLARE SWANSON



The 11 companies that made *PW*'s list of fast-growing independent publishers in 2013 include four first-timers, four companies reappearing on the list after falling off for a year or two, and three companies that made the 2012 list. The fastest-growing publisher on the *PW* list in 2013 is not only making its first appearance but also represents the first time that a company headed by a self-published author has hit the list.

Bella Andre started Oak Press LLC in 2011 to publish the novels she writes under the Bella Andre and Lucy Kevin names. After posting solid sales in 2011, its first year of operation, Oak Press reported a spike in revenue of over 300% in 2012 as Andre released nine original e-book titles and five audiobooks, and began moving more aggressively into international markets.



Bella Andre

Andre, who remains Oak Press's only full-time employee, kept

the momentum going in 2013 with the release of four new e-books, the publication of five new mass market paperbacks, and one hardcover released in a deal with Harlequin, plus the publication of eight audiobooks through the ACX/Audible program. Although 75% of Oak Press's 2013 revenue came from e-books, Andre says she was "astonished" at how fast audiobook sales grew last year, and sales from the format are now well into six figures. In early 2013, Andre also signed another agreement with Harlequin which gave the Toronto-based publisher world English print rights to six titles written under the Lucy Kevin pseudonym. (As Kevin, Andre has written, among others, the series *Four Weddings and a Fiasco*.) By the end of 2013 Oak Press's backlist stood at 30 titles, and the publisher has licensed titles in eight countries, with books already out in Brazil, Portugal, Holland, Turkey, Thailand, and Indonesia.

One of Oak Press's biggest initiatives in 2014 will also be tied to the international markets, as Andre looks for more audio growth and works to do more translation deals rather than selling licensing agreements. To that end, Oak reached a deal with Kobo this February through which, in exchange for helping with the French translation, Kobo gets a three-month window to sell e-book editions in the *Four Weddings and a Fiasco* series; after the exclusive period, Oak Press can then distribute the French-language e-books on all retailer sites for all devices, make POD paperbacks of the French translations, and release French audiobooks.

The second-fastest-growing company on the list this year is another first-timer, **PaperCutz**. Founded in 2005 by Terry Nantier,



Fast-Growing Indie Publishers

Fast-Growing Independent Publishers, 2011–2013

PUBLISHER	SALES GROWTH 2011–2013	EMPLOYEES 2011–2013	TITLES 2011–2013
Oak Press San Francisco, Calif.	453%	1–1	7–4
Papercutz New York, N.Y.	152%	5–7	36–46
Turner Publishing Nashville, Tenn.	142%	15–13	10–12
Pegasus Books New York, N.Y.	128%	5–7	72–120
Fox Chapel East Petersburg, Penn.	79%	40–37	91–115
Soho Press New York, N.Y.	46%	5–11	59–85
Morgan James Publishing New York, N.Y.	25%	34–36	80–168
Chelsea Green White River Junction, Vt.	18%	19–20	31–24
Kumon Publishing Teaneck, N.J.	15%	4–4	12–12
C&T Publishing Concord, Calif.	10%	47–47	54–58
Cleis Press San Francisco, Calif.	4%	7–5.5	50–60

SOURCE: PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

the company specializes in publishing graphic novels for kids (its slogan is “Graphic Novels for Tweens”). Indeed, Nantier attributes Papercutz’s growth in part to “careful choices geared to a tween audience.” The company’s licensed properties include graphic novel editions of *Lego Ninjago*, the *Smurfs*, and *Geronimo Stilton*. Other solid sellers have been the *Hardy Boys* and *Nancy Drew* titles, which were the first titles published by the company. According to Nantier, “99% of our publishing is books,” with the most significant exception being a series of comic books based on WWE stars. It released the WWE series for adults in December, and a separate children’s series will be released in June. Most of Papercutz’s titles are available as e-books, Nantier says. Its print titles are distributed by Macmillan.



Turner Publishing’s big sales jump between 2011 and 2013 was due in part to the bet founder Todd Bottorff took in April 2013 when he acquired more than 40 “not-yet-published” frontlist titles

from John Wiley as well as about 1,000 backlist titles. The purchase was in keeping with Bottorff’s plan to have Turner publish more high-profile titles. That strategy paid off with the success of *Gluten Freedom* by Dr. Alessio Fasano, founder of the Boston

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Center for Celiac Research, and *Bob Dylan: The Biography*. Of the 2,000 active titles Turner now owns, the company counts 14 *New York Times* bestselling authors.



Pegasus Books publisher Claiborne Hancock credits the company's 128% increase in print and e-book sales since 2011 to the "dynamic development" of its nonfiction program, focusing on science, history, and memoir/biography. In the digital area, the company continued to work with Open Road Integrated Media in 2013 as an e-book partner, and e-book sales grew approximately 40% from 2012. Pegasus's most successful titles in 2013 included the memoir *The Girl with No Name* by Marina Chapman and Vanessa James, and *The Norman Conquest* by Marc Morris, both of which received solid media attention. Pegasus's initial focus was on mysteries, and Pegasus Crime, its literary suspense imprint, did well again in 2013 led by *The Stranger*, the fourth novel by Camilla Läckberg.

Pegasus brought on Iris Blasi as senior editor and marketing director to ramp up social media efforts last year. Blasi spearheads outreach for both print and digital media campaigns. "We worked very closely with our distributor, W.W. Norton, this past year, to keep our laydowns at an aggressive level, while at the

same time protecting ourselves from punitive returns," adds Jessica Case, associate publisher. In looking ahead at the coming year, Hancock says that Pegasus will continue to pursue traditional publicity channels on the national level, as well as explore new digital opportunities.



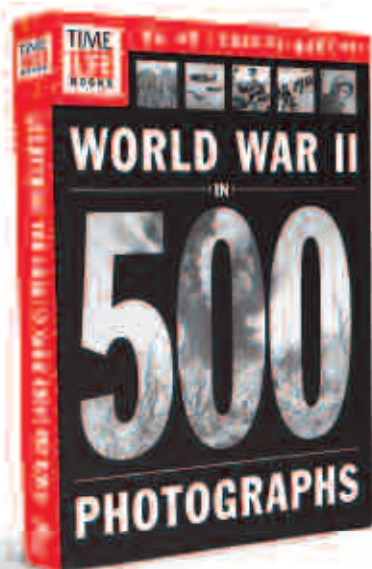
Fox Chapel had a 79% sales increase between 2011 and 2013, which president and publisher Alan Giagnocavo attributes to "sticking to a few main subject areas and then reaching a certain critical mass and prominence by publishing widely within those areas." Its 2011 acquisition of the Design Originals line beefed up the craft category, which is a "rapidly growing market" for the company, according to Giagnocavo. In its Design Originals imprint, Fox Chapel saw great success with its *Totally Awesome Rubber Band Jewelry* guide book published in October 2013, which tapped into the rubber band jewelry phenomenon early. The publisher has also seen growth in its line of Zentangle drawing books—there are now more than 20 titles.

Giagnocavo also points to the "dynamic duo" of editorial director Peg Couch, who has been at the company for 12 years, and v-p of sales Ray Wolf, who joined the publisher last year as keys

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to success in 2013. “They are an energetic and creative team, creating and selling new titles in real time,” he says. While digital still remains a “tiny” part of its business (“most of our titles belong in the workshop, where print is still king,” explains Giagnocavo), international sales have seen steady growth. In looking ahead, Fox Chapel is actively looking to acquire other publishers that will either extend its offerings or take the publisher into complementary fields.

Solid sales of print books to bookstores and libraries, more titles, and more aggressive marketing and publicity were all factors in driving up Soho Press’s sales by



46% over the last three years, explains publisher Bronwen

Hruska. During the year, Soho added 10 titles to its new Soho Teen line and also expanded its Soho Crime publishing program. Soho Crime authors who continued to sell well last year were David Downing, Stuart Neville, Peter Lovesey, and Barbara Cleverly. To help promote its expanded list, the company doubled its marketing and publicity department, emphasizing “bricks-and-mortar-focused marketing plans to help with discoverability,” Hruska says. As for libraries, Hruska observes, “I can’t tell you how important librarians are when we are thinking about the life and success of a title.” To reach that market Soho attends all the major library conventions.

Soho’s bestselling title last year was *The Boy in the Suitcase* by Lene Kaaberbol and Agnete Friis. Cara Black had a “breakout year” in 2013, Hruska says, with *Murder Below Montparnasse*, the 13th in her Aimée Leduc series, making the *New York Times* bestseller list her first week out. Juliann Garey’s *Too Bright to Hear Too Loud to See* “was a champion of our literary list,” Hruska says, with the debut novel gaining strong reviews and good sales.

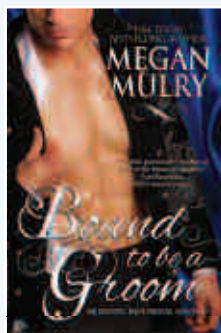


Kumon Publishing North America launched in 2004 with eight titles and two

customers, according to Brian Klingborg, senior v-p. As part of Kumon Inc., which operates learning centers in 47 countries, the publishing division focuses on educational workbooks for kids ages 2–14 that cover basic learning skills, math and reading. It now sells more than two million workbooks annually, and one of its most important accounts is Barnes & Noble, where Kumon titles compete with those from Carson Dellosa and B&N’s own line of workbooks, Flash Kids. Its top titles in 2013 were My



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Kumon handles its own sales and distribution, working directly with B&N, Target, and Amazon and uses book reps to reach independent bookstores and toy/educational supply stores.

The company has slowly entered the digital publishing market and launched its first iPad app, Kumon Uppercase ABCs, in 2012. Klingborg says the app, priced at \$3.99, continues to sell well and was updated last year. Kumon was happy enough with sales of the app that it recently released its second digital product, *Pittsun Tsun: The Sounds of a Rainy Day*, an interactive multicultural e-book that tells the story of children playing in the rain and features a variety of onomatopoeia for the Japanese sounds of rain.



Morgan James Publishing roughly doubled its output between 2011 and 2013 through a number of initiatives headlined by the start of three divisions: Morgan James Faith, Morgan James Kids, and Morgan James Fiction. Founder David Hancock says the company also was able to attract more authors through increasing its presence at different events where company executives spoke on “entrepreneurial publishing.” In addition to higher title output, increased e-book sales contributed to the overall gain, Hancock says. For every 100 trade paperbacks Morgan James sold of a nonfiction title, it sold 25 e-books, while for fiction it was selling 50 e-books for every 100 paperbacks. The company also added more hardcovers to its product mix, helping to lift revenue.

Frontlist nonfiction titles that did well last year included *Subliminally Exposed* and *Grow Regardless of Your Business's Size, Your Industry or the Economy and Despite the Government*. A stellar backlist performer was *35 Dumb Things Well-Intended People Say*. Hancock says he hopes to release 200 titles in 2014 and is excited about benefitting from sales through Scribd's subscription service.

After growing by more than \$1 million in 2012, **Chelsea Green** was able to hang onto most of that increase in 2013. Between 2011 and 2013 e-book sales ramped up, rising 49% in the period, and accounted for about 8% of total revenue last year. Chelsea Green's top-seller in 2013 was Sandor Katz's *The Art of Fermentation*, which was also a bestseller when it was released in 2012, followed by Katz's older fermentation book, *Wild Fermentation*. Frontlist titles that sold well in 2013 were *Paradise Lot*, *The Resilient Farm and Homestead*, and *The New Cider Maker's Handbook*.



Chelsea Green was one of the first publishers to have a consignment program, and publisher Margot Baldwin says it “continues to be very successful and in most cases has doubled or tripled sales over the stores' previous nonconsignment history.”

Baldwin says Chelsea Green has no major new projects planned for 2014, which is its 30th anniversary. “We are profitably hum-

ming along,” she says. She is hoping for a possible breakout book in the year with *Hemp Bound*, which Baldwin explains could benefit from the new farm bill, which lifts the prohibition about growing the plant, “and has growers chomping at the bit to make it into the new (old) multibillion-dollar agricultural crop.”

The decision to move more aggressively into the book trade—



C&T Publishing had been focused on craft stores—has proved to be a profitable one. The company first entered the book trade in a serious fashion in 2010 when

it launched its Stash Books imprint, which focuses on books about handmade fabric arts; the imprint now makes up about 50% of C&T's catalogue, says publicity manager Megan Scott. The success of the line led C&T to develop a children's imprint in early 2013. FunStitch Studio released 12 titles in 2013 and had the company's bestselling book, *We Love to Sew*. The imprint is geared toward 8–14-year-olds and “aims to create a love of handmade in future generations,” Scott says. Ten books are set to be released in 2014. Scott believes the success of Stash and FunStitch is because “both fill a void in the marketplace.”

C&T was an early adopter of technology, and its e-book sales doubled again in 2013. In addition to *We Love to Sew*, other top-selling titles last year were *The Loyal Union Sampler from Elm Creek Quilts*, *Modern Holiday*, and *Pillow Pops*.



Cleis Books moved quickly in 2012 to take advantage of the Fifty Shades phenomenon, promoting relevant backlist titles and publishing new projects, but it suffered in 2013 as a glut of (mostly cheap) erotica titles, particularly in e-books, flooded the market, resulting in a decline in digital sales of erotica in 2013, publisher Brenda Knight says.

Cleis was able to offset that decline by developing a number of hits in its Viva Editions imprint. *Getting to 50/50: How Working Parents Can Have It All* by Sharon Meers and Joanna Strober was a top-seller last year with 25,000 copies in print. Benefiting from an endorsement from Sheryl Sandberg, the authors received lots of national publicity including features in the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*. Another Viva bestseller was Mark Nepo's *Reduced to Joy*. The imprint's lead fall title, *Reduced to Joy*, has sold out every printing and is now up to 40,000 copies in print.

Strong audiobook sales also helped to offset the decline in erotica. Rose Caraway, the popular podcaster of “The Sexy Librarian” and “Kiss Me Quicks” stories, narrated *Gotta Have It* plus *Sweet Danger* and *Smokin' Hot Firemen*. This fall Cleis will release Caraway's *The Sexy Librarian's Big Book of Erotica*. In addition to its own audiobook sales, Knight says Cleis benefited from licensing audio rights as well. And the erotica category was not a total bust for the company. *The Big Book of Orgasms* had “incredible sales,” Knight says, and hit the top 10 short story anthologies list on Amazon. ■



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