

Bologna Book Fair 2014 Preview: Emerging Imprints and Promising Publishers

In many ways sub-agents are the unsung heroes of international publishing. Essentially acting as agents for agents, they provide a measure of how an agent's books might work in various markets and which houses might be interested. In children's publishing, sub-agents are a relatively recent phenomenon—mainly within the last few decades—and the increase in their numbers is indicative of the growing strength of the international market for children's books. As one literary agent puts it, "Anyone can sell Rick Riordan or J.K. Rowling. But a lot of publishers aren't in it for the big money, and they're looking to sell their books to like-minded publishers around the world." That's where sub-agents come in.

Since children's publishers from many nations will be assembling later this month in Bologna, we asked a number of sub-agents to recommend a new or emerging company that is doing interesting and unusual publishing.

Alex Webb, Rights People, London

With the big houses merging and many publishers streamlining their lists, there are fewer U.K. publishers buying in from the U.S. these days. But there are some new players on the horizon. Probably the most high-profile of new U.K. children's publishers is **Hot Key Books**, a division of Bonnier Publishing, which has done an excellent job of making a name for itself in the U.K. market.

One company that is less well-known is the new Constable & Robinson imprint, **Much-in-Little**, which is described as a "bijou fiction imprint" for children and young adults. It was set up two years ago by editor Sarah Castleton and it publishes seven to eight titles per year. Much-in-Little is focused on quality and not quantity; the list tends to the original and literary. Its first title was Catherynne M. Valente's *The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland in a Ship of Her Own Making*, and the imprint has gone on to publish several more of her books successfully. Constable & Robinson has just been bought by Little, Brown in the U.K., but will continue to work as an independent publisher, giving it the benefit of an enhanced sales and distribution network while retaining the appeal of a small and boutique list.

Silke Weniger, Literarische, Agentur Silke Weniger, Munich

2013 was a good year for selling children's book rights in Germany. For many years the German market was known to be difficult for younger children's literature, and especially picture books did not seem to travel easily. However, last year a couple of new foundations and new formations by merger brought a flush of freshness into the market. Aladin was founded within the Bonnier group, Sauerländer was bought by Fischer, and NordSüd intensified their long collaboration with Oetinger. Diogenes emerged again and tied in with their former tradition of being a publisher of outstanding picture books. Gerstenberg was active in buying rights (Mo Willems!). And besides established names like Beltz & Gelberg, Carlsen, and Hanser, we saw a wonderful variety of old and new houses performing on the longlist for the very prestigious German state award for children's literature: Aracari, Atlantis, Peter Hammer, Jungbrunnen, mixtvision, Moritz, Klett Kinderbuch—and Jacoby & Stuart.

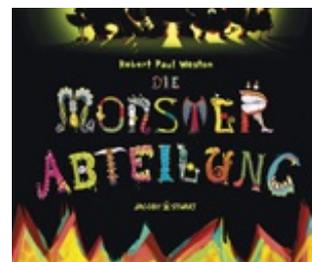
Jacoby & Stuart's edition of *The Creature Department*.

Though Edmund Jacoby and Nicola Stuart have been in the business for decades, their own house, **Jacoby & Stuart**, was only founded in 2008. Having worked as publisher and chief editor at Gerstenberg for many years, the couple left the company to move to Berlin and start their own house of children's books,



cookery books, and graphic novels. More than 200 titles have since been published under the label Jacoby & Stuart, including the German edition of *Zorgamazoo* by Canadian author Robert Paul Weston and now his new and edgy children's novel, *The Creature Department* (published in the U.S. by Razorbill); eight titles have been sold to the U.S.

Michèle Kanonidis, La Nouvelle Agence, Paris



Les Grandes Personnes was created by three women: Brigitte Morel (who is looking after the picture books, mostly their own creations), Florence Barrau (who is looking after the fiction catalogue), and Sabine Louali (who is selling foreign rights, mostly in their picture book catalogue). All three of them were part of the children's/YA department of Editions du Seuil, working with Jacques Binzstock; they all left Seuil together when it was bought by La Martinière Group. They participated in the creation of Editions Panama but when this adventure ended, the three of them created Les Grandes Personnes three or four years ago.

I do think they have created a very interesting catalogue. It is different and at the same time very appealing. It is always a challenge as an agent to sell a book to them. It has to be literary, whatever the age target, and at the same time accessible and creative. Lately, I sold them the French rights to *All the Truth That's in Me* by Julie Berry and *The 9 Lives of Alexander Baddenfeld* by John Bemelmans Marciano (both Viking).

Jennifer Brooke Hoge, International Editors' Co., Barcelona

Fulgencio Pimentel—the unusual name is taken from a song by the Spanish female pop duo Vainica Doble—is a small publisher with an exquisite catalogue that includes graphic novels, literature, and children's and young adult books. Founded in 2006 in Logroño, La Rioja, Spain, by César Sánchez, this independent project has a three-person team. What makes them exceptional is the high quality of their authors paired with rigorous aesthetic criteria. They pay as much attention to the literary aspect as to the design and production of each book, always selecting the right materials and a final format that faithfully reflects the content. Previously unpublished complementary material is often included in their editions, such as articles, bibliographies, interviews, and illustrations.

*Fulgencio
Pimentel*

Initially, Fulgencio Pimentel just published a few titles a year, though since 2011 they've ramped up their publications quite a bit and will be publishing over 20 titles in 2014, many of which will be children's and young adult titles to be published under the children's imprint that they are now relaunching, called Fulgencio Pimentel e hijos. Some of their biggest successes include titles with crossover potential for both adults and young adults, such as *Vampir* by Joann Sfar, North American Jaime Hernandez's YA comic *Rocky*, as well as Jim Woodruff's Frank series, which has won multiple international awards.

Eszter Rozs, Katai & Bolza Literary Agents, Budapest

Tilos az Á Könyvek (= Trespassers W Books), an imprint of the successful Hungarian children's book publisher Pozsonyi Pagony (whose name, Ashdown Forest of Pozsonyi ut, refers to Milne's classic Winnie-the-Pooh), started out six months ago with the purpose of publishing young adult fiction by domestic and foreign authors who have either written for children before or work in other fields as theater or movie directors, playwrights, and script editors. Its projects target the sensitivity and interest of young people of this century without relinquishing the high level of the classics.

Prior to starting as editor-in-chief at Tilos az Á Könyvek, Dóra Péczely was in the same post at two major literary houses, Magveto and Helikon, for many years. Although coming from the adult literary world, she has always felt challenged to try out how to make the young become sensitive readers. She is convinced that good children's and YA books are widely read by adults as well. As she puts it: "The language of YA literature is more lively, more exciting and more contemporary than the language of adult fiction, as if the authors understood how radical an effect the digital world and the continuous present tenseness have had

on communication, and also how much the perfection of language and the imagery have added to the human conversation.”

Thus far Tilos az Á Könyvek has published three titles by Hungarian authors, and another three are forthcoming along with their first foreign titles: *Trevor* by the American author James Lecesne, and a Dutch novel by Bart Moeyaert.

The Polish editions of *Maps*, and *Welcome to Mamoko*.

Kamila Kanafa and Maria Kabat, Macadamia Literary Agency, Warsaw

After years of low-quality, commercial children’s products flooding our book market, the recent Polish picture books have become our national pride and probably the best export good, and have finally started to claim their position on the international scene. I can’t name an adult book that would have, in the last few years, sold as many foreign licenses and received such tremendous recognition abroad as *Maps*, a lavishly illustrated children’s atlas. The publisher, **Dwie Siostry** (Two Sisters), sold the book to 17 countries, and the combined sales almost exceeds 250,000 copies—an impressive result for a picture book that is not a movie tie-in. Dwie Siostry’s other title, *Welcome to Mamoko* (sold in nine territories; now a book series), invites children—even reluctant readers!—to become storytellers. Both works were written and illustrated by husband-and-wife team Aleksandra and Daniel Mizieliński, graduates from the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw.



Dwie Siostry (run by Jadwiga Jedryas, Joanna Rzyńska, and Ewa Stiasny) was one of the first to bring back to life the best traditions of the Polish children’s books illustration, and set a good example to other dreamers who followed suit. Some of them, for example, quit well-paid jobs in advertising to cater to the younger but no less demanding art consumers. This is how **Wytwornia** was born—run by Magdalena Klos-Podsiadlo, the company publishes critically acclaimed titles, whose innovative graphic design stands out among the crowd.

Wytwornia’s *All Tuned Up* by Anna Czerwinska-Rydel and Marta Ignerska received a Bologna Ragazzi Award in 2012, and *Pampilio*, by Irena Tuwim and Monika Hanulak, received a 2012 honorable mention in The Best Designed Books from All Over the World international competition, hosted by the Artbook Foundation in Frankfurt and the Leipzig Book Fair.

Another good example of a publishing house with an exceptional list that was born out of need to provide books that would foster imagination and offer something other than well-known classics is **Muchomor**, started by young mothers (Katarzyna Radziwiłł, Anna Skowrońska, Maria Środoń and Maria Deskur; the last two left the company a few years ago) dissatisfied with what the market offered more than 10 years ago. Fast forward to the present, and their masterly crafted books for kids ages 1-15 are not only pleasantly intelligent, but also well-received abroad, and earn international recognition. They cover such themes as philosophy (*The Rabbit and the Hoopoe’s Philosophical Debate About Justice* by Leszek Kołakowski), lives of significant figures like philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, astronomer Johannes Hevelius or physicist Daniel Fahrenheit, and picture books that marvel the youngest and adults alike (*The Elephant Child* by Adam Jaromir and Gabriela Cichowska, about a small elephant, who travels alone from Mombasa to the Saxonian village, or *Jajuńciek* by Paweł Paweł, about a tiny little rabbit, whose bravery is inversely proportional to his height).

Even though the financial crisis had its toll on the Polish book market just as on any other market, the need for well-designed, smart children’s books ignited by those mentioned above (and many others, like *Ładne Halo*, *Hokus Pokus*, *Bajka*, *Czerwony Konik* – to name just a few!) proved to be shared by the readers around the globe. What is more, they also inspired some of the biggest Polish trade publishing houses, who started to develop similar lists of their own. This is a rather admirable achievement if we take into

account that at first, Dwie Siostry, Wytwórnia and Muchomor were just small, niche publishers.

Efrat Lev, Deborah Harris Agency, Israel

Children's publishing in Israel has caught up to and kept up with the global trends of fantasy, paranormal, middle grade, and even graphic novels. What is perhaps most noticeable and unique to our market, though, is an impressive leap in the quality of illustrations. In the past few years it is clear that book illustration has become a viable career option for talented art school graduates, and with this, we've seen a cornucopia of beautiful illustrated books, both classics and new books, published by larger houses and small presses alike.

Ocean's editions of *Watership Down* and *Water Babies*.

A publisher that stands out in its declared mission is **Ocean Books**, specializing in translations of classics such as *Dr. Dolittle*, *Tarzan*, *The Little Prince*, *Watership Down*, *Bambi* (not the Disney version!), *The Water Babies*, *Oliver Twist*, and many more—from Pushkin to Mark Twain. What's noteworthy about Ocean is its commitment not only to the quality of the contemporary translations but to an outstanding aesthetic of presentation, inside and out.



Another interesting publisher is **Zeltner Publishing House**, which does both translations and original children's books, with an eye to visual excellence alongside top literary merit. Zeltner is not afraid to take on seemingly less commercial books and turn them into the kind of books that garner much media attention, institutional support, and children's interest. A series created in-house on the lives of Great People (for the early reader/middle-grade age group) was launched with a very literary rendition of the life of Louis Pasteur, originally written in Polish by the great educator Janusz Korczak and translated by Israeli Andersen Award winner Uri Orlev. This biography of a scientist has become a surprise bestseller; the next title, the life story of the beloved Astrid Lindgren, promises to repeat the success.

Rockyoung Lee, KCC (Korea Copyright Center), Seoul

While most of our big publishers have built up their imprints and have followed safe courses, publishing selected famous authors' work or nonfiction, small independent publisher **Baram Books**, established in 2003 with the idea of "respect for freedom, difference and relationship," does children's and teens literature only. This is because it has its own philosophy and strategy imposed by the publisher and president of the house, Yoonjung Choi, who has been actively engaged as a editor, translator, and literary critic for a long time. Baram Books had worried about why the development of domestic authors works was so trivial compared with the remarkable growth of the translated books and found a solution in developing new talented authors and their works. After taking a solitary path for 10 years, now its books have become the most important Korean literature, loved by young audiences, teachers, and librarians.

Cynthia Chang, Bardon-Chinese Media Agency, Taiwan

The GKB edition of Brian Selznick's *Wonderstruck*.

Global Kids Books was founded in 2002 by Commonwealth Publishing Group after two decades of success in adult trade titles. Despite the declining birth rate and shrinking children's book market in Taiwan, GK has been able to produce record sales and keeps coming up with new products. In 2011 it launched a magazine, *Global Kids Monthly*, focusing on the years from eight to 12; this is a very difficult age group in our market because the school



curriculum is heavy, and [pleasure] reading is nearly impossible. However, with rich content and high quality, GK has been able to break even, with subscriptions reaching 50,000 in just a year. Its books also benefit from the success of the magazine, which serves as a publicity platform targeting a precise audience. This year, GK is going to launch yet another magazine, *Global Kids Junior Monthly*, targeting the age group of five to nine. GK is energetic and full of new ideas, and does careful market research before launching new products.



Lester George Hekking, Sebes & Van Gelderen Literary Agency, Amsterdam

Karakter Uitgevers has recently made a successful venture into children's, YA, and New Adult books, and is expanding this part of its list slowly but steadily. It is a young and modern publishing house that I admire for its "courage" since it does not shy from taking risks. The first young adult trilogy it released is off to a good start: the Testing trilogy by Joelle Charbonneau has just seen publication of the second book, and Karakter has created a rather close community of readers online who have

devoured the sequel and are all eagerly competing to get a first peek at the series finale. I love the dialogue that goes back and forth between the publisher and its customers. Karakter was also the Dutch pioneer of the New Adult novel: we licensed Abby Glines's steamy *The Vincent Boys* and its sequel to Karakter, which paved the way for other publishers here to let go of their inhibitions towards the genre. The brains behind all of this are Francis Wehkamp and Tomás Kruier, and I can recommend them to anyone who represents YA with attitude.



Karakter Uitgevers B.V.

Blossom Books is technically not a new publisher but rather a new-and-happening imprint of Kluitman publishers, led by the spirited Myrthe Spiteri. I like Myrthe's taste: she has an "antenna" for picking out the exclusive and beautiful titles among all the young adult stuff that's out there, but she isn't afraid to put a quirky title or two in there either. They publish the intense Shatter Me (Tahereh Mafi) series and darker Grisha (Leigh Bardugo) series gladly next to serious coming-of-age stuff like *Zac and Mia* by A.J. Betts or the bizarre Pink Crystal Ball (Risa Green) books. Even when her list already seems maxed out she has been known to add an extra title to it purely because she loves a book so much. Blossom Books may have a pink and girly side but it's far from stiff and old-fashioned. This amazing imprint successfully reaches a bold and fresh young audience but, more importantly, also knows how to stay in touch with them!

Solan Natsume, Tuttle-Mori Agency, Tokyo

Right now all children's publishers seems to struggle desperately to survive, shrinking themselves as much as possible. The main two distributors now restrict the quantity of distribution of the first printing of children's books around 1,000 copies of each title—far from enough to reach to possible readers in the entire country. Making a big promotion is really difficult. And from this April, consumption tax will be raised to 8% from the current 5%. The entire book market will suffer a big blow for some months at least. How I crave a supernova title that will change the market completely, like Harry Potter did once. Before Harry Potter, fantasy was the least wanted genre in Japan. After HP, everyone wanted fat volumes of fantasies!

Donatella d'Ormesson, Donatella d'Ormesson Agency, Paris

A French bestseller from Collection R.

I work with many interesting publishing ventures, but one that stands out as a success story is **Collection R, éditions Robert Laffont**, a dynamic and innovative French YA imprint always attentive to the mood of the times. After barely two years of existence, the Collection R imprint for teens, launched by the prestigious Robert Laffont publishing house, has managed an unexpected growth in a dull French market, achieving a 2013 turnover of nearly 2.5 million



euros. After working for seven years as an editor for Pocket Jeunesse (the publishing house for *The Hunger Games*, *City of Bones*, and *The Maze Runner*), its young publisher Glenn Tavenec has started this new imprint in the perspective of developing French and Anglo-Saxon YA fiction, both popular and of quality, with crossover, high-concept projects. The Collection R imprint has quickly acquired a wide and loyal readership.



Convinced that direct contact with his audience was key, Tavenec has been working from the start with more than 60 of the most influential French YA bloggers, consulting with them about various editorial issues in a private Facebook group. Out of the 30 or so books published so far, more than 10 are already bestsellers, some of which are currently being adapted by American studios: the 5th Wave trilogy by Rick Yancey, the Selection trilogy by Kiera Cass, the Starters/Enders duology by Lissa Price, as well as the one-shot *La Couleur de l'âme des Anges* (*The Color of Angels' Souls*) by HRH Sophie Audouin-Mamikonian, and the Kaleb trilogy by a French thriller writer using the pseudonym Myra Eljundir.