

Broadcast news, part 1: BookShorts debuts new TV series at BookExpo

BY BRIONY SMITH

Jun. 14, 2006: The newest additions to BookShorts executive producer Judith Keenan's filmic family made their Canadian debut on the trade show floor at BookExpo Canada Monday, and a new broadcast series, *BookShorts Moving Stories*, was announced.

"Our audience is socially active and pop culture-savvy – we wanted our catalogue to reflect our audience," says Keenan, whose picks for this year include the funny cartoons of Mireille Silcoff's *Archetypes*, the violence-soaked *The Fighter* from Craig Davidson, and *jPod* by Douglas Coupland.

Screenwriter Bruce Pirrie, who penned the *jPod* and *Confessions of a Pilgrim* BookShorts, found that the length of the films was a challenge, but *Confessions of a Pilgrim* author Sue Kenney didn't find the three-minute timeframe limiting: she's parlayed her BookShort into a one-woman show in London and television appearances on Bravo. "It really gives you entry into different markets," she says. "It gives authors a whole new credibility, as it's leading-edge in the industry."

Keenan is keen on BookShorts' many uses. "They allow us to do a lot of placement, from literary festivals to film festivals to author tours, and can give us an edge when booking readings," she says.

In her quest for an edge, she is also capitalizing on the media blogging craze (think YouTube) by putting out the call to aspiring filmmakers on their website, where excerpts from BookShorts books are available, in the hopes that the public will "engage with the book" and make their own BookShort for submission.

This do-it-yourself grassroots feel is also evident in *Moving Stories*, the first few episodes of which were aired at the trade show and will be featured on ACCESS: The Education Station, Canadian Learning Television, and BookTelevision this fall. The series shows the behind-the-scenes action on the BookShorts shoots, and then includes the BookShort itself. Trade-show snippets included actors practicing a bloody fight scene from Mark Hesselink's film of *The Fighter*, and Angel Largay gambling with the budget money in Bert Kish's *No Limit Texas Hold'em: A Complete Course*.

"One of the main challenges in publishing is finding new audiences, especially when they're always in front of a screen," says Keenan. "You can lose readers to 'sexier' media, but if we can make reading sexier and inspire them to get their hands on a book, if that happens just once, we win."