

## BookShorts goes to Washington

BY MELANIE MAH

**Jan. 20, 2006:** Judith Keenan, executive producer of **BookShorts**, a company that produces short films based on new books by Canadian authors, is hoping to make a big splash south of the border this year when she launches her newest productions at BookExpo America in Washington, D.C.

The May event won't be the first time BookShorts have been shown in the U.S., and Keenan thinks her previous experience there bodes well. A capacity crowd turned up at the New York location of McNally Robinson Booksellers in July 2005 for the American launch of the **Susan Swan** book, ***What Casanova Told Me***. "We had the [BookShort] of that book on a loop for four days before her reading," Keenan says. "Booksellers have regular customers, and those customers are more likely to attend the reading of an author they know. I think it encouraged attendance; people came back."

Since the company's inception in 2004, BookShorts has produced four short films, three to five minutes in length, inspired by the new books by Canadian authors. Keenan either contacts publishers, agents, or writers for appropriate manuscripts or they contact her. (BookShorts will be accepting manuscript submissions for the upcoming summer season until February.) Once manuscripts have been selected, each one is paired with a production team that is funded by a three-way partnership between BookShorts, the publisher of the book to be adapted, and **Canadian Heritage**, which funds the project through its Book Publishing Industry Development Program. This year there is room in the budget for six to 12 films.

The films have aired on arts-friendly broadcasting venues like Bravo!, TVO, CBC's late-night television show *ZeD TV*, and a digital channel specializing in short films called **Movieola**. They also find audiences at author readings; on the Internet; in kiosks at bookstores (Pages Books and Magazines in Toronto and all four Book City locations in the city were hosts to kiosks last year); at literary festivals like the Word on the Street and Wordfest, the Banff-Calgary International Writers' Festival; and even film festivals such as the Worldwide Short Film Festival and the St. John's International Women's Film Festival.

Keenan is also excited about a new partnership between BookShorts and a production company called **Telefactory**, which is headed by **Leanna Crouch**, a producer who has worked for NBC, Fox, CTV's *Canada AM*, and TVO's defunct book-based talk show, *Imprint*.