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Author embraces iFuture



By Greg Burluk, Kingston Whig-Standard
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Publisher Frank B. Edwards, left, and Pat Morrow, right, author of the recently-released iBook *Everest: High Expectations*, take a break from photo editing at the Edwards' office this September. The book celebrates two successful Canadian attempts to climb Mount Everest in 1982 and 1986. (Photo credit: Bungalo Books)

Frank B. Edwards has never been afraid to chart unknown literary waters. When he was starting his children's book publishing business in the early '90s, he was one of the first to use desktop publishing.

Now he's one of the first to get into iBook publishing, which is specifically engineered for that medium.

Edwards, who lives north of Kingston, recently published *Everest: High Expectations*, about Canadians Pat Morrow and Sharon Wood, who were both part of teams that climbed Mount Everest in the '80s. It's available for the iPad in the online iTunes store.

It was time, Edwards said, for a change.

He had seen his children's book business shrink drastically. He was partners with illustrator John Bianchi.

"In the '90s, we were selling 100,000 to 200,000 copies a year," he said. "We had 38 titles and we'd usually sell 50,000 copies of a new title. Last year, we sold 1,500 copies of our backlist. I couldn't cover the cost of printing the book from the sales."

Seeing the writing on the wall, he took a year off to study e-publishing at Algonquin College in Ottawa. Then, as luck would have it, he started talking with an old friend, Morrow, a climber-photographer he had known since the mid-'70s.

"When I was working for Canadian Geographic, I was the first to buy an article from Pat," said Edwards.

Morrow was part of the first Canadian expedition to successfully climb Mount Everest in 1982. By then, Edwards was an editor at *Equinox* magazine, then a fledgling publication run by James Lawrence in Harrowsmith, after Harrowsmith magazine had become a national success story. *Equinox* was supplied by Morrow with pictures of the climb as well as an exclusive story about it.

The expedition was not without tragedy as four of the party were accidentally killed on the way up the mountain. Morrow wanted to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the expedition and also mentioned to Edwards a 1986 climb by Sharon Wood, who became the first North American woman on the summit, and whose party established a new route to the top, one which has never been repeated.

Publishing the work as an iBook had several distinct advantages according to Edwards. Although devising the iBook was virtually the same as a regular book, "there were no printing bills, no costs for the return of unsold books."

"If I had printed a book like this," he said. "I'd have had to charge \$40, but this way I only charge \$10.

"I used to publish really beautiful, full-colour coffee-table books. Now I publish beautiful coffee-tablet books."

To those who argue that pictures on a coffee-table book are bigger, Edwards points out that on an iPad, you can expand pictures so that they occupy the whole tablet and are thus just as big.

"Also, it used to drive me crazy having a great picture broken up by the gutter (spine) of the book," he said. "On iPad, that doesn't happen."

Edwards also has high praise for the reproduction quality on the tablet, which he says makes the photos as good as they were originally.

Then there is the fact that as soon as a book goes on sale in the iTunes store, it immediately has a potentially global set of buyers.

"There are 50 iTunes stores around the world," said Edwards. "Right now, *Everest* is being sold in seven countries in just six weeks. The trick is learning how to promote it."

The tablet also allows for multimedia usage and *Everest* has both audio and video segments that were made when the climb was actually going on. More pictures are also possible. In some sections, you can click on one picture and get a whole sequence of them.

"You could do a lot of stuff like that, so that in the end, it's like being on a website," said Edwards. "But I wanted to keep it as much as possible like a traditional book."

He has also released his first nine children's books on the new format and is planning to do more of them.

“There are no rules and no one knows what they’re supposed to be,” said Edwards, whose next project may be about the Arctic.

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Essentials

Who: Area resident Frank B. Edwards has published one of the first books made specifically for the iPad.

What: Called Everest: High Expectations, it celebrates two successful Canadian attempts to climb Mount Everest in 1982 and 1986.

Online: The book is available in the online iTunes store for \$9.99, plus tax.

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