

PAGES

READING... *For Dummies*

BY ROY GREEN
Staff Writer

When it comes to prolific authors, alphabet mystery writer Sue Grafton is already up to P. Agatha Christie, P.D. James, John Grisham and Steven King just churn them out, Canada's own Pierre Berton has a ton of titles and that guy Shakespeare was no slouch, either.

But no one, absolutely no one, can touch John Kilcullen, who has published more than 40 books a year for the past 10 years.

Few people have heard of John Kilcullen, but he is the genius behind the... For Dummies books, an incredible publishing output that currently stands at more than 400 titles and still counting.

Currently, John Wiley & Sons is close to an agreement to buy Hungry Minds Inc., which publishes the For Dummies series.

The Books for Dummies series is a phenomenon that will reach 100 million books published sometime this fall. And it all began with a conversation overheard in a book store about a dozen years ago.

The so-called story behind the story is that an associate of our chairman, John Kilcullen, overheard a customer in a book store complaining about an 800-page book explaining the DOS computer system," says Jennifer Smith, sales and marketing vice-president of CDG Books. "The customer told the clerk, "You don't understand, this book is too complicated. What I need is DOS for dummies."

"When Kilcullen heard the story, he realized there were lots of 800-page books about confusing topics. He wanted to take the complicated instructions about C-colon-backslash and give people something they can work with. *DOS For Dummies* came out 10 years ago and was an

immediate blockbuster even though the big booksellers wouldn't touch it. They were afraid the dummies reference would insult readers."

How far has this concept advanced since the first Dummies book? Among the 400 titles CDG publishes are: *Choosing a Dog For Dummies*, *Power Yoga For Dummies*, *Italian Wine For Dummies*, *Aquariums For Dummies*, *Back Pain Remedies For Dummies* and *Cool Careers For Dummies*.

It does well in Canada, even though you won't find a Canadian who'll admit to being dumb about hockey.

There are also d-books on vegetarians, champagne, bread machines, aromatherapy, beer, carpentry, allergies and asthma, America's national parks, fundraising, guitar, arthritis, etiquette, cruise vacations, cover letters, piano, pit bulls, tarot, weather, the Civil War, Walt Disney World @ Orlando, triathletes training, 101 crossword puzzles (volumes 1 through 5), birds, blues and buying a car.

And it shouldn't come as a surprise that *Sex For Dummies* has been a best-seller. In fact, there is now *Sex For Dummies, 2nd Edition*.

CDG Books, the Canadian source for dummies books, has 20 d-titles of its own. "The first was Canadian History For Dummies and it has proven to be a phenomenal success," says Smith. "It had a wonderfully warm reception from educators."

Other d-book subjects unique to Canucks include wills and estates, real estate,



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