

SHATTERING A FLAWED BUSINESS MODEL

A Conversation with
Archebooks' Robert E. Gelinas

by Mark Terry

Mystery Scene Magazine
Fall Issue #86 2004
www.mysteryscenemag.com



Bob Gelinas thinks he's the luckiest guy in the world. "For many, many years," he says, "when I wore a suit and traipsed around the world in the high-tech world, I dreamed of being able to devote myself full-time to writing some day. Unfortunately, for far too long, economic necessities precluded that. But starting my own company not only freed me from the bonds of the yuppie hamster wheel, it made my dream come true in ways I never imagined."

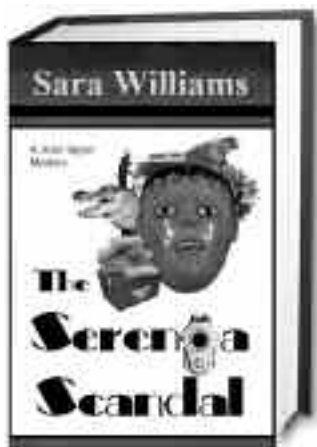
Gelinas is the author of a number of novels published by Simon & Schuster and Kensington/Pinnacle. For years his "day job" was as a high-tech executive. "I spent over twenty years working my way up the corporate ladder, from network engineer to President & CEO of an Information Security software company. In

2001, my business partner, Ralph Wolf, and I founded Gelinas & Wolf, Inc., a marketing services and business consulting firm."

Dismayed by trends in publishing, Gelinas & Wolf, Inc., founded ArcheBooks Publishing, "dedicated to bringing original works of fiction to the market." Says Gelinas, "As each year passed the publishing industry seemed to me to move more and more to the publication of the 'no risk sell-through,' (established authors, celebrities, politicians, the famous and the infamous) an accounting-centric policy of little-to-no-risk that equated to less and less opportunity for new authors." As of May 2004 ArcheBooks Publishing had thirteen hardcover titles in print. They also release books in ebook format. The first six were released in 2003 and they have plans

to publish twenty in 2004. They hope to publish one to three new titles per month, increasing that as they expand editorial and production staff. "However," Gelinas says, "we take a very meticulous 'hand-crafted' approach to editing and designing each book and we have no desire to lose that for the sake of sheer volume."

ArcheBooks specializes in Mystery-Suspense, Science-Fiction & Fantasy, Horror, Romance, Historical (both fiction and non-fiction), and will soon be releasing their first Young Adult (YA) titles. For example, *The Don Juan Con* by Sara Williams is a mystery-suspense novel about a sweetheart swindler, and *Unholy Alliance* by Dana Reed, a serial killer book featuring a female New York City homicide detective. Says



ARCHEBOOKS PUBLISHING

9101 W. Sahara Ave.

Suite 105-112

Las Vegas, NV 89117

(800) 358-8101

www.archebooks.com



Gelinas, "We feel strongly that mystery-suspense, which includes crime fiction, is one of the most popular market segments in the publishing industry. Two of my own novels are murder-mysteries, so maybe I'm a little biased in this category. Many of our upcoming titles are in this area. In fact, this genre is one of the few out there with dedicated bookstores, trade magazines and events, and a very easily definable customer base. That makes marketing to them much easier."

ArcheBooks Publishing uses print-on-demand technology (P.O.D.), which allows them to print a smaller volume of books for a higher unit cost when the demand is low. In other words, ArcheBooks pays attention to the bell curve of sales, producing fewer books at the beginning and end of a book's cycle, and more in the middle when sales start to increase. "We use off-set print runs," says Gelinas, "producing a higher volume of books at a lower unit cost, when a book has demonstrated traction in the market and demand is high. Thus, we've employed a tiered 'right tool for the right job' methodology to produce a near 'just-in-time' production model."

He is also quick to point out that although they use P.O.D. technology, they are not to be confused with publishers like iUniverse or Xlibris. "We are in no way, shape, or form a vanity press. We charge no fees whatsoever to our authors. Rather, we invest heavily in the professional editing, artistic design, production, marketing and promotion of each of our titles." Unlike most P.O.D. publishers, ArcheBooks are 100% returnable. "We wished to stay far-afield from the negative stigma of what are referred to as 'P.O.D.' publishers, despite the fact we do make use of digital production technology where appropriate. We also deliberately sought to shatter the flawed business model and culture of traditional New York-style publishing at the same time."

With their combined years of experience in business and marketing, it's understandable that Gelinas and Wolf put great emphasis on marketing. They design a detailed marketing program for each author, with expectations that it will be followed. It includes "a wealth of collaterals to help sell the book: cover art posters, flyers, book signing announcements, postcards, bookmarks, press releases, and more. We provide a training guide for the authors," says Gelinas, "so they know what to do to get out there and get to work." They also attend the assorted genre conventions like Bouchercon and DragonCon (for the SF and fantasy writers and readers).

ArcheBooks itself also does targeted advertising, editorial solicitation, press releases, sends out review copies and attends conferences and book fairs. "Not to sound callous to the art or overly simplistic," says Gelinas, "but the truth of the matter is, a book is a retail consumer commodity aimed at a well-established, highly-competitive marketplace. Taking any product to market for the first time requires a well-thought-out branding campaign, identifying the target segments, defining packaging and messaging themes, selecting the appropriate marketing communications mediums, determining the frequency of communication, selecting appropriate author events, and the like. The truth is, marketing is marketing, and you either know how to creatively and successfully do it, or you don't."

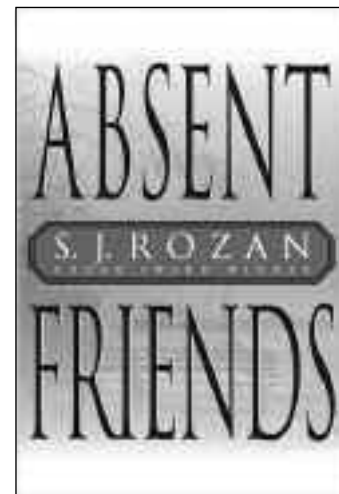
So Gelinas is a happy man. "My business partner, Ralph Wolf, is an early bird who lives with his wife in Las Vegas, three time zones to the west. My wife and I live on the water in south Florida, about a hundred miles due north of Key West. So both Ralph and I get going about the same time each morning—me around 9:00 EST, him around 6:00 PST. As ex-computer executives, we have all the finest computer and networking equipment known to man. So we can video-conference, email, and instant message as needed. My high-speed Wi-Fi wireless router allows me to get out of my office when I desire, to work either sitting by the pool or even down on my boat docked in my backyard on a deep-water gulf access canal. I work in shorts (shirt and shoes optional) basking in the endless summer and sultry warm breezes of the sea."

"The simple fact is," says Gelinas, "the publishing industry is a \$27 billion market—that's billion with a 'B.' ArcheBooks Publishing's business model is such that if it never captures a market share large enough to even hit 1%, we'll still all live happily ever after, doing what we love to do. And if we ever do hit 1% ... I'll buy a bigger boat."

For information about ArcheBooks Publishing's titles or submission procedures, visit their website at <www.archebooks.com>.

Mark Terry is a freelance writer and editor living in Oxford, Michigan. His first Meg Malloy mystery, Dirty Deeds (\$12.95), was published by High Country Publishers in April, 2004. <www.markterry.com>.

New from Edgar, Anthony,
Nero, Macavity, and Shamus
Award-winner
S. J. ROZAN



The secrets of a group of childhood friends unravel in this haunting thriller that winds through the years and the streets of New York—and explores a world that was forever changed on a clear September morning.

"Exquisite ... full of heart, soul, passion, and intelligence."
—Lee Child, bestselling author of *The Enemy*

"Brilliant ... at once a compelling mystery, a heartfelt tale of friendship and a moving chronicle of courage and heroism."
—Jeffery Deaver, bestselling author of *Garden of Beasts*

"A wise, compassionate book."
—Lisa Scottoline, bestselling author of *Killer Smile*

 www.sjrozan.com
Wherever books are sold