



Retail, Drove Chronicle Backlist in 2021

Increased foot traffic in retail stores, new accounts and reliable backlist sales resulted in a strong year for San Francisco-based Chronicle Books in 2021 as well as specialty stores,” said the president of Chronicle Books, Tyrrell Mahoney. “Specialty stores – Uncommon Goods, CostPlus, Williams Sonoma, Pottery Barn, Old Navy – showed real interest in the books and had customers.”

Chronicle publications are designed to be engaging and “meant to be discovered,” Mahoney said, noting that browsers in stores have actually noticed the magazine’s cookbooks, picture books, journals and puzzles. ‘business.’ I would point out that [the good news] It wasn’t just Chronicle Books, it was all of our distribution customers. For example, Levine Querido, in his second year as a Chronicle customer, had a strong sales year and celebrated Donna Barba Higuera’s Newbery Medal win in January 2022 for *The Last Storyteller* and Darcie Little Badger’s Newbery Honor for *A snake falls to earth*.

Chronicle’s 2020 acquisition of Ridley’s Games, Games Room and Petit Collage eco-friendly toys from British company Wild + Wolf also added to total sales, which were up double digits from 2020. amazing,” Mahoney mentioned.

She credits much of the credit to backlist staples, which have become “anchor tracks” for Chronicle. For example, Sherry Duskey Rinker and Tom Lichtenheld *Good evening Good evening Construction site* “got a real boost” with new titles being added to the popular series, she said.

Mahoney also highlighted two standouts of the year: Michigan chef Abra Berens’ cookbook *Grist* and Minnesota blogger Sarah Kieffer *Cooking for the holidays*. “We also did well with *A Confederation of Dumptys*, our third John Lithgow title,” added Mahoney. “Such a great person! We were really lucky to work with him.”

The other top performers were *Peak*, the surprisingly packed, photo-filled career retrospective of filmmaker Spike Lee from Chronicle Chroma; Sainte-Claire Detrick-Jules *My beautiful black hair*, with 101 personal accounts and photographic portraits; and the Shawn Harris Picture Book *Have you ever seen a flower?* Recipient of a 2022 Caldecott Honor.

The good year came despite some difficulties in printing and shipping the work on time, and some fall 2021 books became spring 2022 books. “We import 90% from abroad and we have incredible partners in China that we have worked with for many years,” Mahoney said. “We did a lot of work last year to

prepare, to rearrange the schedules.” She also found that “trying to find national solutions has become more difficult for reprints and first impressions,” a situation that has yet to be resolved.

A few months into 2022, Mahoney said she felt much more comfortable dealing with supply chain challenges and had seen some reduction in those issues. She expects on-time launches for titles including that of illustrator Sophie Blackall *Things to look forward to* (April), “about her time during Covid, life’s little joys – a lovely gift book”; Zach Manbeck’s Picture Book *Beginnings, You are the* (May); by Kim Krans *The Unknown Wild Alchemy Deck and Guide* (Prism Chronicle, May); and a new title thanks to Chronicle’s non-exclusive partnership with Lego, Brian Barrett *The art of the minifigure* (June).

Mahoney also detects an enthusiasm for face-to-face networking at conferences. “We exhibited at NY Now, the big gift show in early February,” she said. “There were a lot of retailers coming to the show to place orders and ask about anything they had missed. It was rewarding to see how many retailers would come, especially because we were on the fence. It is a great sign of the future. As trade shows progress, we will continue to lean as long as it is safe.

As for how authors will promote their titles, it very much depends on the platforms and communities of individuals. Mahoney expects ClassPass founder Payal Kadakia, the Los Angeles author of the recently released commercial title *LifePass: Surrender Your Limits, Expand Your Potential*” will be released locally,” she said. “We see her working with bigger companies and founders of color.”

However, returning to festivals and signing tables could take some time. “On the author’s side, it’s going to be pretty localized for now,” Mahoney said. “We look at it like, are people going to show up? Will the authors feel safe? Decisions at the consumer level are yet to be determined.