

Everyone has a story to tell

By JULIANNA KERR
Special to the Times

A revolution in book-publishing technology has begun, and it's happening right here. Book Express at the Cambridge Centre is one of only three Canadian locations that currently offers an economical new option for printing books. It's called the InstaBook Maker, and it prints and binds materials into paperback books on-site in a matter of minutes, depending on the number of pages.

Anne Laird of Book Express said she expects this new technology will eventually make many books available to the public, particularly those volumes that may be out of print and difficult to find.

"It's still essentially a pilot project," she said, "because there aren't the books available from the publishers yet."

Dave Di Marcantonio, president of InstaBook Canada, said he came up with the idea after reading an article about problems the book industry was facing.

"I wondered why they couldn't just produce books as they were needed," he said.

So he looked into the concept, and found InstaBook Corporation in the U.S.

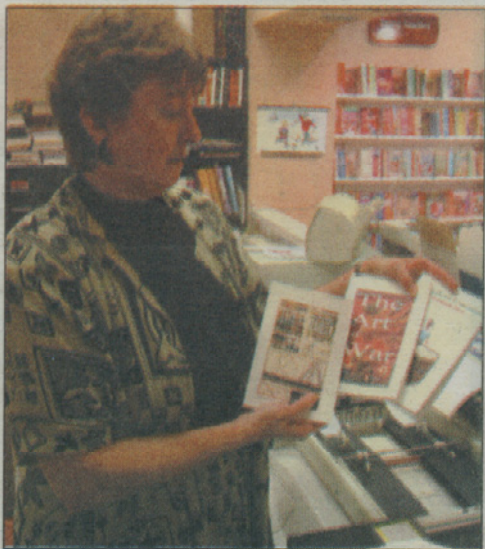
After meeting with them, it was arranged that Di Marcantonio and InstaBook Canada would become this country's sole distributor of the printing services.

The initial idea was to focus on creating an electronic library of titles available for downloading. InstaBook is still working on licensing agreements with such Canadian publishers as Penguin, ECW Press and Scholastic Books of Canada.

In the meantime, the InstaBook Makers are hard at work, printing books for people who are publishing their own work.

Laird said this is a wonderful opportunity for the general public.

"People who couldn't afford to publish



Anne Laird of Book Express shows off several Instabooks.

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now can - at a very reasonable price," she said. "We've certainly had lots of interest in this. We've had maybe a dozen self-published titles done here."

Prices vary depending on the length of the book, but the average consumer could end up paying anywhere from \$7 to \$14 for each volume. These amounts depend not only on the number of pages, but also on the number of books ordered for printing. As an introductory offer, for \$150 (plus tax), customers will get one proof and 10 copies of the book, printed and bound.

Di Marcantonio suggested that the benefits born out of this new technology are endless, from economically keeping any title in print, to publishing personal memoirs, custom recipe books or family histories.

"We're really of the belief that everyone has a book in them," he said. "Everyone has a story to tell."