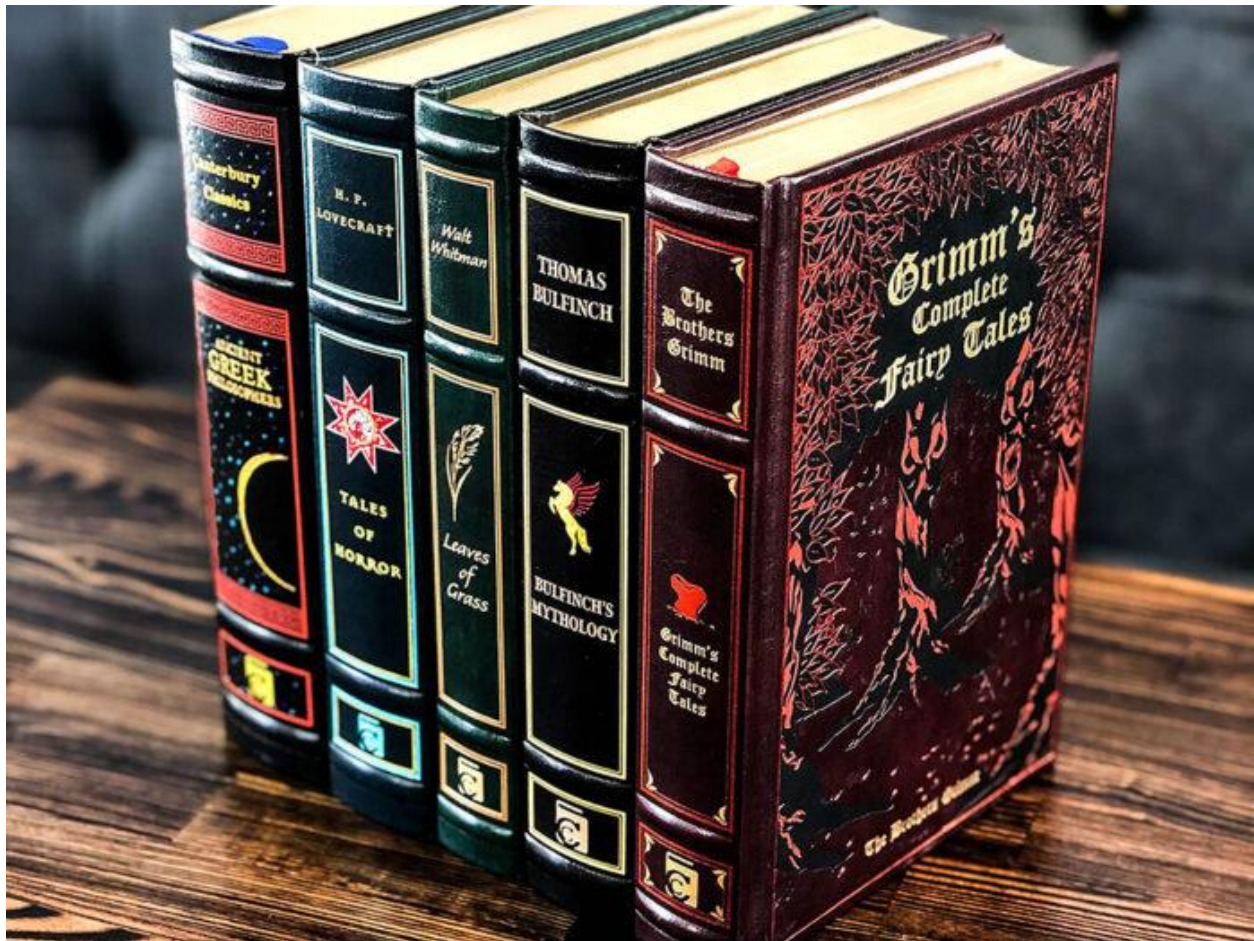


# SD Firm Making Big Imprint in Publishing

RETAIL: Printers Row Specialty Books Widely Available

BY

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Printers Row Publishing Group, a division of Readerlink Distribution Services, publishes everything from children's books to crochet kits. Photo courtesy of Printers Row Publishing

Printers Row Publishing Group is a Sorrento Valley company that few outside of the publishing industry may know, but the company has touched the lives of countless people around the world through its books.



Peter Norton  
Publisher  
Printers Row Publishing Group

Like big picture books? They're a specialty of Printers Row.

Classics? Printers Row produces beautiful, leather-bound versions complete with ribbon bookmarks.

Maybe you're looking for children's books that capture the imagination? Printers Row sells those too.

“You’ll see our books everywhere – Barnes & Noble, Walmart,” said Publisher Peter Norton. “We’re available in most retailers.”

### From Classics to Children’s Books

The company got its start publishing big coffee-table picture books, Norton said.

“Over the past several years, we’ve become more diversified,” Norton said. “We follow trends. We get ahead of trends because we know what’s working in all of our retailers.”

Printers Group’s imprints include Canterbury Classics, Portable Press, Thunder Bay Press, Silver Dolphin Books, Studio Fun International and Dreamtivity.

The company is licensed to produce everything from painting kits to embroidery kits featuring such popular characters as Barbie, Harry Potter, Blippi and characters from Disney and Star Wars.

Among its top sellers are licensed crochet kits by Thunder Bay Press, with more than 250,000 kits sold, the leather-bound classics from Canterbury Classics, with more than 2.2 million books sold, and “You’re My Little Cuddle Bug” series from Silver Dolphin Press, with sales topping 1.5 million books.

A classic of sorts, with 35 annual editions to date and sales topping 15 million books, is Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader.

A hit with the toddler crowd and their parents are books based on the live-action character Blippi, who dresses in orange and blue togs complete with orange glasses and orange suspenders.



Debra Mostow Zakarin  
Publisher and Senior Director  
Printers Row Publishing Group

“We work with some of the most major brands out there and we create children’s books that are interactive in some form,” said Debra Mostow Zakarin, publisher and senior director at Printers Row. That includes sound books.

The company also publishes box sets of books by popular authors, adult coloring books, cookbooks and reference and travel books.

“We’re consistently in the top five in some of the (book) titles year-round,” Norton said. “We are market driven and we find these gaps then we build franchises. We come up with successful formats then we scale those out.”

## Expanding Reach

Printers Row Group is a division of Readerlink Distribution Services, based in Chicago. Dennis Abboud is CEO.

The company is run by publishing veterans. Simon Tasker, executive vice president and general manager, ran product development at Disney Publishing; Norton came to Printers Row from Barnes & Noble; Zakarin is a former editorial director at Mattel and former executive editor of DreamWorks Press, DreamWorks Animation; and Lilian Nordland, vice president of editorial and production, was with Random House and Golden Books.

Printers Row traces its history back to 1982 when it started as Advanced Marketing, distributing books to membership warehouses, including Costco. Advanced Marketing was acquired by Baker & Taylor Publishing Group in 2007 and, in 2015, Baker & Taylor was acquired by Readerlink Distribution Services, which formed Printers Row.

Printers Row is based in a 28,000-square-foot, two-story building in Sorrento Valley. While the company is growing, Tasker said there are no plans to move to a larger building. “We still have some room to grow there, but the growth’s been substantial,” he said. “What we try to do is fill in the gaps in the marketplace.”

Unlike some publishers, Printers Row doesn’t solicit manuscripts to publish.

“We don’t acquire from the outside,” Zakarin said, adding that Printers Row will come up with an idea then go to its stable of writers, “who we think might be the perfect fit.”

The printing takes place elsewhere, primarily abroad, Tasker said.

Tasker said the company's latest marketing initiative is to expand its reach within stores that already carry its products.

“Part of our focus right now is if you go into Walmart or Target, we're in the book department. There's a lot of other departments in those stores. There's the baby department, there's arts and crafts. We're working on trying to expand the reach of books beyond just the book department to put them in the right department where the consumer is,” Tasker said.