parency was due to be released in February. Sifry, who has published books with Random House and Simon & Schuster, says that editors at the larger publishing houses typically are juggling many projects. "If you are lucky enough to get the attention of their publicity department, it's usually very skimpy unless you are already a famous author." With OR Books, he says, "I feel like I have their full attention."

Of about a dozen books published so far, half have sold 4,000 to 6,000 copies — a good amount for the titles, says Oakes. He notes that after a book's promotional period runs its course, the book can get a second life when OR licenses the title to a traditional publisher.

The OR model isn't the only solution to the changing publishing landscape, says Oakes. "It's a possible solution," he says. "Anyone can do this, and it confounds me that more publishers aren't." *By K.F.G.*

NEWSMAKERS

LOCOMOTIVES *The Washington Post* chose *Day for Night*, a novel by **FREDERICK REIKEN '88**, as one of the 10 best books of 2010. ... Princeton-based NRG Energy, led by president and CEO **DAVID CRANE '81**, has pledged $1 million to support the Solar Electric Light Fund (SELF), which will support development in Boucan-Carré in Haiti. ... Historian **SUSAN WHYMAN *93**, a fellow of the Royal Historical Society in London, recently was awarded the Modern Language Association of America's Prize for Independent Scholars for her book *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers, 1660–1800*. ... **JOHN H. EICHHORN '69**, a leader in the development of safe anesthesia practices and standards, has won the 2010 John M. Eisenberg Patient Safety and Quality Award from the National Quality Forum and the Joint Commission. ... In January, singer and songwriter **ANTHONY D'AMATO '10** performed "Thunder Road" with Bruce Springsteen and others at a benefit show in Asbury Park, N.J.

Spotlight

John Schmitt *01

Running-robot designer

Résumé: Published in 2009 a much-talked-about paper in "Bioinspiration and Biomimetics" introducing ideas for robot locomotion inspired by cockroaches. Assistant professor at Oregon State University's School of Mechanical, Industrial, and Manufacturing Engineering. Princeton doctorate in mechanical and aerospace engineering.

THE ADVANTAGES OF COCKROACHES

A 2008 paper by Robert Full at the University of California, Berkeley, detailing the advantages of cockroach locomotion intrigued Schmitt, who specializes in bioinspired robotic design. Cockroaches run over rough terrain without hesitation, undaunted by drops and heights that would foil humans. One reason is that when cockroaches run, their motion is more reflexive than that of human beings, who think more when negotiating rough terrain. A proponent of bioinspiration — examining nature for design ideas — since his days at Princeton, Schmitt decided to look to the roach.

BUILDING A BETTER ROBOT

Schmitt comes up with strategies to improve robotic motion based on the physiology of roaches and guinea hens (who also run surprisingly well) and then tests different simulations on a computer. Jonathan Clark, an engineer at Florida State University, builds the robot following Schmitt's design. Schmitt points out that many of today's most impressive robots work only in the specific environments for which they were created. He aims to create robots that can handle a variety of terrains.

SPRINTING TO THE FUTURE

Schmitt was delighted when a one-legged robot attached to a boom proved to be a fast mover. A paper on this robot is under review at *Bioinspiration and Biomimetics*. The impact of a running robot could be huge: It could be a superior spy, dashing up walls while transmitting audio and video data. It also could help in earthquake recovery efforts, sifting through rubble too dangerous for humans to go near. People's initial reactions to hearing about the unlikely source of Schmitt's inspiration, he reports, is "Ewww ..." After all, cockroaches have a history as a problem for mankind. But when it comes to robots, the pest may offer some solutions. *By Maya Rock '02*

COURTESY JOHN SCHMITT '01

PAW ONLINE **WEB BONUS LINK** **Video: Watch a cockroach run over rough terrain, at paw.princeton.edu**