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The SERRE Group triples its web traffic as Google Book Search increases the visibility of its niche titles

The SERRE Group today consists of three publishing houses, but has its origin in the Society of Publications and Regional Research (La Société d'Éditions et de Recherches Régionales - S.E.R.R.E.). Serre Editeur was founded in 1979 with the aim of promoting the culture and local patrimony of Provence and the county of Nice. It has since published more than 400 works and several magazines on these subjects, as well as audio-visual and multimedia works.

Group Serre also comprises Gandini, which primarily focuses on the “Maghreb” (former colonial French North Africa), and whose works are sold almost exclusively online. The third publishing group of SERRE is Extrem-Sud, which for the past ten years has specialized in guides to North Africa and the Sahara.

Challenge

Although based in Nice, France, the editorial focus of the SERRE Group also encompasses the Mediterranean and North Africa. While the majority of its books are published in French, some titles are available in Italian and Arabic. Today, the majority of the company's transactions – which are valued at around one million Euros – occur online.

Given its unique editorial focus and the extraordinary importance of the web in the company's sales, the SERRE Group was very interested in increasing the visibility and sales of its works on the web, and in particular on its own website.

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ABOUT GOOGLE BOOK SEARCH

Google Book Search enables publishers to promote their books on Google. Google scans the full text of participating publishers' titles so that Google users can see books that match the topics they are searching on. When users click on a book search result, they're taken to a Google-hosted web page displaying a scanned image of the relevant page from the book. Each page also contains multiple “Buy this Book” links, which enable users to purchase the book from online retailers. Users may also see contextually targeted Google AdWords ads on these pages. Publishers will receive a share of the revenue generated from ads appearing on their content.

For more information, visit
<http://books.google.co.uk>

Approach

The SERRE Group counts as one of the pioneers in French publishing, with an online presence dating back to 1995. It was little surprise, then, that the company was eager to give Google's innovative Book Search programme a try.

The SERRE Group joined Google Book Search in November 2005, providing the programme with 374 of its 500 works. That November, traffic to its site jumped to 1,500 visitors per day, and now average traffic is around 3,500 visitors per day. At the same time, sales figures have increased by around 20 to 30 percent.

The title *L'Architecture à Nice 1940-1965* ('Architecture in Nice 1940-1965') has had 14% of its viewers click on the “Buy this book” link that appears alongside the book's page view and bibliographic information. Because Book Search's innovative technology looks inside an entire book, innumerable search terms can trigger this book as a result – from something as simple as “homes Nice” to “post-war architecture.”

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Gerard Colletta
CEO, SERRE Group

In addition, the exposure Book Search has offered to the SERRE Group’s works reaches across its catalogue: its two most viewed titles are Théâtre, littérature et société au Moyen-Age (‘Theatre, Literature, and Society in the Middle Ages’) and L’Algérie, histoire, conquête et colonisation (‘Algeria: History, Conquest, and Colonization’).

Encouraged by this increased visibility, the company expects to increase the number of works participating in the programme. The company is also studying Book Search traffic data for their out-of-print books as an indicator of book popularity, in order to help determine which books should be reprinted.

“The return on investment has been infinite given that the service itself is free,” says Gerard Colletta, CEO of the SERRE Group.

“The programme is easy to use and quickly transfers information about out works,” he adds. “It’s a model for other services like FNAC or Amazon that allow the consultation of book pages.”

