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Will the Katrina book tide ebb?

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At BookExpo America in 2006, the nation's major publishing houses were all too eager to announce their Katrina-related books.

Douglas Brinkley, history professor at Tulane, was one of the first on the scene with his tell-all *The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast*. Also participating in a disaster-related panel at BookExpo were Robert Block and Christopher Cooper, authors of *Disaster: Hurricane Katrina and the Failure of Homeland Security* and Dr. Irwin Redlener, author of *Americans at Risk: Why We Are Not Prepared for Megadisasters and What We Need to Do*.

What followed that year was an onslaught of books about the destruction, the aftermath, the government's role or lack of response, personal memoirs, animal rescue and even some written for children.

Last year at BookExpo, publishers were asking writers to please stop submitting hurricane books. It appeared the interest had waned.

But has it?

"It has slowed down tremendously," said Drew Zeigler, Lafayette Barnes & Noble store manager, speaking on the demand for Katrina titles. The only hurricane books moving fast these days, Zeigler said, were the titles now in paperback and at bargain prices.

But Katrina books continue to be released, many to much acclaim. In December, photographer Thomas Neff published his gripping photos and essays on those who refused to leave immediately after Katrina titled *Holding Out and Hanging On*. In April, photographer Dan Burkholder released his coffee table-sized book of enhanced, emotional photographs in *The Color of Loss: An Intimate Portrait of New Orleans After Katrina*.

New Orleans photographer George Long follows this trend with his collection of photos out this month titled *Katrina Days: Life in New Orleans after Hurricane*

Katrina. The self-published book will be sold primarily from his Magazine Street gallery, he said, but he expects to sell out based on customer comments and requests.

Later this summer Simon & Schuster will release *Not Just the Levees Broke: My Story During and After Hurricane Katrina* by Phyllis Montana LeBlanc, the outspoken participant in Spike Lee's documentary, *When the Levees Broke*. (Lee writes a foreword in LeBlanc's book and Long took the cover photo.)

Two recently released books relate the rescue of horses after Katrina -- *Molly the Pony* by Pam Kaster, a children's book published by LSU Press with videos on YouTube and *Horses of the Storm*, a collection of first-hand accounts of how the LSU Equine Rescue Team saved hundreds of horses.

One book lacking throughout this publishing spurt is one specifically focused on the devastating Hurricane Rita.

"That was my most asked question of the year, 'Where are the Rita books?'" Zeigler said.

Despite the slowdown, several books are scheduled to be released this summer, many around the third-year anniversary date of Katrina, Aug. 29. From all appearances, the Katrina tide is still coming in.
