

# BOOKSELLING **THIS** Week

AMERICAN BOOKSELLERS ASSOCIATION

June 19, 2008

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## Reaching Out to Local Retailers Through IndieBound

June 19, 2008 -- <sup>1</sup> With IndieBound <sup>2</sup> Literary Liberation Box materials in hand, ABA member booksellers ranging from Bainbridge Island, Washington, to Woodstock, New York, are reaching out to other local independent businesses in their communities. Response from other indie retailers has been, in a word, "excited."

In Washington, Eagle Harbor Book Company <sup>3</sup>'s Morley Horder brought some of IndieBound's marketing materials to the attention of the Bainbridge Island Downtown Association <sup>4</sup> as soon as he returned from BookExpo America. "They were very enthusiastic, and immediately grabbed some rally cards and wanted to use them as posters to display around town. They just jumped right on it, and came up with a logo using the ideas and colors from IndieBound." Adding that the group also wants to display the "Here's What You

Just Did <sup>5</sup>" flier in Bainbridge businesses, Horder said, "I hadn't expect it to be accepted by non-bookstores so easily."

<sup>6</sup> The Bainbridge Island Downtown Association also plans to distribute fliers and educate the community at an upcoming town barbecue and fundraising event. The group has only had the IndieBound materials for a couple of weeks, but long-range plans are in the works, said Horder. "The graphics and materials are so powerful and easy to use that I see them being used and displayed in every store, especially since a lot of it can be personalized with store names. One thing I really want to do is get all the other trade associations, hardware associations for example, in on this so indies across the country are united by IndieBound. I think it's big enough and well thought out enough to make that happen."

When Barbara Theroux of Fact & Fiction <sup>7</sup> in Missoula, Montana, returned from BookExpo America, she immediately went to the IndieBound Bookseller DIY <sup>8</sup> and downloaded the "Here's What You Just Did" handout. "I [personalized] and printed one for every business on my block, then delivered them with the "Declaration of Independents," a button, and a window sticker," she said in an e-mail. "Each business had their own personalized poster, and they were VERY excited! The next day there were requests from other businesses ... nothing like the power of a good idea."

"[IndieBound] seems targeted toward a younger, hipper market, which fits with what I'm trying to do," said Sarah Loftus of the 1,000-square-foot The Bookworm's Attic <sup>9</sup> in Huntington, West Virginia. "It suggests that if you're looking for something more interesting, come to an indie store. And that's how I'm differentiating between the chains and us."

The same decals, fliers, and bag stuffers that The Bookworm's Attic will use to emphasize the message "if someone needs an interesting book they don't need to get it from rack on Wal-Mart" will work just as well for the bookstore's neighboring independent businesses, observed Loftus. "I'll take the decals to the local pharmacy and talk about how they might not be able to take on Rite-Aid, but they can stress that they're different, and they can celebrate that."

Loftus' favorite IndieBound tag line is "Doing our part to make America interesting." "I'll definitely be co-opting that," she added.

Ellen Shapiro, who owns The Golden Notebook <sup>10</sup>, a general bookstore in rural Woodstock, New York, considers the educational component of the Literary Liberation Box a possible lifesaver. The 30-year-old bookstore, which includes a children's section that is in a separate, but neighboring building, has been in danger of closing.

"We've been working with a group of people interested in saving the bookstore, and we were developing marketing materials," explained Shapiro. "Then the Liberation Box arrived, and its focus was *exactly* what we had thought we needed. Our plan was to educate the community about how important independent businesses are. Now we can use the IndieBound statistics to show that."

Shapiro's favorite tagline? "Independence is a Virtue."

To help spread the IndieBound message, ABA staff will be

traveling to different parts of the country over the next several months to meet with booksellers to discuss the many ways that the program and its materials can be used and adapted to spread the word about the importance of independent retailers. As part of that effort, this week ABA Chief Marketing Officer Meg Smith met with the New England Independent Booksellers Association Advisory Council and Paige Poe, IndieBound's outreach liaison, participated in the Great Lakes Booksellers Association Tech Talk in Indianapolis, Indiana. Watch for announcements about upcoming IndieBound information sessions in *Bookselling This Week*. -- Karen Schechner<sup>11</sup>

## Community Investment Model Brings New Life to Vermont Town

June 19, 2008 -- Though a good indie bookstore is a fantastic anchor for a vibrant Main Street, the bottom line is that a successful bookstore's happy customers will be happier still if their downtown offers other unique experiences.

<sup>12</sup> It was with this in mind that several years ago Linda Ramsdell, owner of The Galaxy Bookshop<sup>13</sup>, began to mobilize residents in an effort to create a restaurant in Hardwick, Vermont. On Saturday, May 24, those efforts came to fruition when Claire's Restaurant & Bar opened for business. Moreover, the restaurant business model brings the idea of community to a new level, with residents banding together to provide the financial support that made Claire's possible.

Hardwick -- population 3,000 -- was a booming granite town at the turn of the last century, but it fell on hard times in the 1960s. "They called Hardwick 'Little Chicago' due to the crime," Ramsdell explained. But today, the rural town, with a curvy Main Street, covers the spectrum: there's poverty, wealth, and everything in between.

Before Claire's, downtown Hardwick had a pizza place and a diner, but no proper restaurant. It also had a building damaged by fire that Ramsdell called "this big black hole in town." Eventually, that hole would become Claire's.

"We wanted to know why we couldn't get a good restaurant in Hardwick," said Ramsdell, who is a partner in the business along with chef and restaurant operator Steven Obranovich and Hardwick residents Kristina Michelsen and Mike Bosia. "We wanted a restaurant that would have a symbiotic relationship with the bookstore, especially when we get questions from people about where they can go out for dinner or dessert following one of our events.... When a great restaurant comes into town, things come to life."

The genesis for Claire's, named after artist and locally renowned hostess Claire Fern, occurred in September 2003. "I sent a letter to customers that said, if you are interested in having a restaurant in Hardwick come to a meeting at the bookstore," said Ramsdell. When 55 people turned up, "that told me there was interest!"

From the very beginning, Ramsdell had in mind for Claire's to follow the business model of Bobcat Caf in Bristol, Vermont. On Ramsdell's restaurant blog, *New Vermont Cooking*<sup>14</sup>, she describes how, in 2002, Bristol residents asked restaurateur Robert Fuller to open a local establishment. He agreed to proceed with the project if 12 local people came forward to demonstrate their commitment to the restaurant by lending \$5,000 each. "In a week, Fuller had 18 commitments and he soon had to cap the number at 32. Those 32 people, plus their families, friends, and neighbors, are a vital part of the Bobcat Caf's success," wrote Ramsdell. "We've

visited the Bobcat Caf and met with Robert Fuller, and his approach has inspired both our community investment model and fueled our desire to create a 'third place' in downtown Hardwick."

There were a number of hurdles to be jumped, however, before Claire's got off the ground. "At first, we had the real estate for the restaurant, but we had no one to operate it," Ramsdell said. "The restaurant idea lay dormant for a while, but it was always in the background for me."

As luck would have it, by 2005 chef Obranovich had moved to Hardwick and was interested in operating the restaurant. But at that point, she explained, "we had an operator but now we didn't have any real estate." In 2006, Ramsdell and her restaurant partners negotiated a lease for the "big black hole" in downtown Hardwick. "At this time, the Preservation Trust of Vermont<sup>15</sup> heard about what we were doing and became interested," she said. The Preservation Trust granted the restaurant the money for the first year of its lease and helped Ramsdell and her partners further develop and adapt the Bobcat model for Claire's Restaurant & Bar.

The model has been a remarkable success: 52 Community Supported Restaurant Coupons (each coupon is \$1,000, and provides a discount of \$25 one time per month, for 10 months per year, during the first four years of the restaurant's operations) were sold to raise \$52,000 in operating capital for Claire's. Another \$45,000 came from loans from people in the community. And thus far an additional \$265,000 in grants and angel investments for the Hardwick Restaurant Group, LLC, has prepaid a 12-year-lease and has furnished, equipped, and built out the space. "The concept is that the community owns the restaurant space, and if the operator leaves, another can come in with minimal investment," explained Ramsdell.

The restaurant, whose menu features fare made from locally grown ingredients, had a May 24 grand opening, which drew a big crowd and a great review from the *Barre Montpelier Times Argus*<sup>16</sup>.

Claire's will be a boon to Galaxy Bookshop, too, Ramsdell said. "It really goes hand-in-hand with the new IndieBound concept. There is a lot of crossover. Usually, after readings we provided cider and cookies." Now, after an event at Galaxy Bookshop, "customers go over to the restaurant and have dessert or a drink. It will bring a higher interest and entertainment value to our events. It makes for a bigger night out. I see it as a big draw." -- David Grogan<sup>17</sup>

## Flooding Impacts Iowa Bookstores

June 19, 2008 -- This week's record-breaking flooding in the Midwest has left a good part of the University of Iowa under water, including the Iowa Memorial Union Book Store<sup>18</sup>. Other Iowa City independents, Iowa Book<sup>19</sup> and Prairie Lights Books<sup>20</sup>, were spared from the flooding, as were booksellers in Des Moines and Cedar Falls.

Iowa Memorial Union Book Store assistant manager Doug Ward said via e-mail that the store is currently under five feet or more of water, but most of the inventory had been temporarily relocated to three separate storefronts in a downtown mall location not far from the University of Iowa's original student union. "We managed to get almost all of the merchandise removed from the location but not fixtures, Lozier, etc.," said Ward. "[It's] unfortunate since we just completed a total building renovation not even two years ago." The bookstore's temporary location will open on June 23 with summer school textbooks, student software, and a limited supply of other inventory, he added.

Because staff knew a flood was imminent they were able to plan an orderly removal of merchandise, but the amount of prep time they had quickly diminished. "The timeline kept shortening until Friday last we were told by the National Guard at 8:30 we had to be completely out of the building before 10:00," explained Ward. "We had previously been told 5:00 on Saturday and then 5:00 on Friday and then noon on Friday."

"Needless to say, organization took a backseat to speed. But we did well -- amazing in fact. The teamwork we exhibited is something I will not soon forget. We had parents in the store for freshman orientation volunteering to load and pull pallets to waiting semis!"

Classes at the University of Iowa have been canceled for the week, and the entire Student Union had to be vacated. "That includes a full hotel, a movie theatre, dozens of meeting rooms, and large scale event spaces," said Ward. "All departments have been relocated with an emphasis on working from home if at all possible. The university is dealing with shortages in power, water, steam, data, servers, and parking."

Located uphill from the university, Iowa Book wasn't in any danger of flooding, said store office manager Pat Brice. However, because of the university closure and the current inaccessibility of the city, Iowa Book has been hit economically. The community at University of Iowa is "pretty devastated," said Brice.

Nearby Prairie Lights "is on high ground," said manager Jan Weissmiller. But since the bookstore is so closely tied to the university, business has been affected. Although relieved that staff members are safe and the building housing Prairie Lights hasn't been affected, Weissmiller is stunned by the scope of the damage to the area. "It's very surreal," she said. "The whole town is cut off, and there's no getting out of here right now. We had to cancel our readings, including one with David Wroblewski."

Weissmiller, and other booksellers who spoke with *BTW*, made note of the massive community effort that's gone into sandbagging and other rescue work.

About 90 miles north, University Book and Supply <sup>21</sup> at the University of Northern Iowa was untouched. "It's pretty devastating on the north side of the river," said Rose Lorenz. "But not where we are." Although some of the store's staff members and their families were affected by the flooding, they were all safe. Lorenz added that the area had had a near miss with the previous week's deadly tornadoes.

The city of Des Moines was hard hit, but Beaverdale Books <sup>22</sup> was "high and dry" and away from the northern part of the city where the levees were breached, said Beaverdale's Diane Gordon. And staff at East Village Books <sup>23</sup> in Des Moines had expected to see some flooding, but the water level didn't reach their part of the city. "We moved everything up to a higher level," said bookseller Mary Krantz. "We were ready for the worst, but we didn't get it." -- *Karen Schechner* <sup>24</sup>

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## The Spirit of Revolution Reigns at Babylon Falling

June 18, 2008 -- Babylon Falling <sup>25</sup>, a 600-square-foot space in San Francisco, is primarily a general bookstore, as well as a gallery space, said owner Sean Stewart. "It is a concept-driven independent bookstore with a focus on the spirit of revolution ... and a culture spot where we embrace no 'ism' and strive to be as inclusive as the space allows." On June 26, Babylon Falling will celebrate its first anniversary with a party, a DJ, and drinks.

Stewart, who grew up in Jamaica, said that Babylon Falling refers to a "call to end oppression of all kinds." He added, "The phrase is in the ideology [in Jamaica], in reggae music, in conversation, just something people say whether it's in music or in the streets."

At its anniversary party, the bookstore will debut an exclusive Babylon Falling T-shirt line, featuring designs by artists who have exhibited or will exhibit their work at the store. The line is the result of an organic process of collaboration with the artists, and the shirts are screen printed locally. Artists contributing designs for the debut series of T-shirts are Emory Douglas, Peter Simon, David Choong Lee, Robert Bowen, Le Bijoutier, John Felix Arnold III, D Young V, and Simon Benjamin.

Babylon Falling, in the lower Nob Hill area of San Francisco, carries about 3,000 titles with an overall slant on "the theory, practice, and history of revolution." Stewart gave a quick tour: "On one side of the store is primarily nonfiction, history, media, politics, and philosophy. We've got a *bunch* of history. On the other side is fiction, graphic novels, art, design, and photography.... The middle is hardcover and paperback new releases."

The store's sidelines include DVDs, artwork (prints, posters, and originals), T-shirts, and collectible vinyl toys, many from Muttpop <sup>26</sup>.

Asked how he got into bookselling, Stewart said that it was "just something I wanted to do" and that Babylon Falling was "an extension of everything I'm into in my personal life."

ABA's new movement to promote independent businesses, IndieBound <sup>27</sup>, is right in line with Babylon Falling's overarching credo, said Stewart, who had just received his Literary Liberation box. "The timing is exactly right for a collective initiative," he noted. "While I won't use everything in the Liberation Box, the things that I do display, I display proudly."

Branding the concept of being an indie appealed to Stewart, as did that the fact that the IndieBound marketing materials don't attack the chains. "I like that it is about celebrating independents and not bashing the big box stores, because I'm positive that ignorance is at the core of the support for the big stores. This will plant an important seed in people's consciousness about the value of supporting independents. In this age of bookstore obituaries, I welcome the positivity." -- *Karen Schechner* <sup>28</sup>

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## BTW News Briefs

June 18, 2008 --

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### Tim Russert BEA 2006 Keynote Podcast Available

BookExpo America has made available the May 2006 podcast <sup>29</sup> of Tim Russert's opening night keynote speech from BookExpo America in Washington, D.C. Russert died on June 13, 2008. At the time of the keynote, Russert had just released his book, *Wisdom of Our Fathers: Lessons and Letters From Daughters and Sons* (Random House), and during his speech he welcomed BEA to Washington, D.C. and shared his insights on family life as well as Washington politics.

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### 2008 Boston Globe-Horn Book Awards for Excellence in Children's Literature

The winners of the 2008 Boston Globe-Horn Book Awards were announced on June 18. Presented annually since 1967, the awards are customarily given in three categories: Fiction and Poetry,

Picture Book, and Nonfiction. This year, as happens occasionally, the judges also awarded a Special Citation.

The 2008 winners are:

- Nonfiction: *The Wall* by Peter Sís (Foster/FSG)
- Fiction and Poetry: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie, illustrated by Ellen Forney (Little, Brown)
- Picture Book: *At Night* by Jonathan Bean (FSG)
- Special Citation: *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan (Levine/Scholastic)

The judges selected two honor books in each category:

- Nonfiction: *Frogs* by Nic Bishop (Scholastic); and *What to Do About Alice?* by Barbara Kerley, illustrated by Edwin Fotheringham (Scholastic)
- Fiction and Poetry: *Shooting the Moon* by Frances O'Roark Dowell (Atheneum); and *Savvy* by Ingrid Law (Walden/Dial)
- Picture Book: *Fred Stays with Me!* by Nancy Coffelt, illustrated by Tricia Tusa (Little, Brown); and *A Couple of Boys Have the Best Week Ever* by Marla Frazee (Harcourt)

All children's and young adult books published in the United States between June 2007 and May 2008 were eligible for the award. The winning authors and illustrators may be citizens of any country. Winners in each category receive a cash prize and an engraved silver bowl. Honor book recipients receive an engraved silver plate. The acceptance speeches of the award winners will be published in the January/February 2009 issue of *The Horn Book Magazine*.

### **New York Times on Small Publishers and Amazon's 'Buy' Button**

In a June 16 article by Doreen Carvajal, the *New York Times* reported that Amazon.com "has adopted the literary equivalent of a nuclear option for rebellious publishers who balk at its demands."

According to the *Times*, Amazon has disabled the "buy now with 1 click" icon on its British Web site for hundreds of books published by the British unit of Hachette Livre in a dispute over the division of revenue from online sales.

The *Times* noted that "customers can still buy the affected books, but they have to navigate to an open marketplace that links them to third-party sellers of new or used books. And they have to pay for shipping."

Paul Aiken, executive director of the Authors Guild in the U.S., told the *Times*: "This is such a clear indication that once they have the clout they are willing to use it to the full extent that they can. It's ugly with Amazon and will probably get uglier."

The *Times* said that Amazon was saying little about its actions.

## **Weekly Indie Bestseller Lists Download Made Easier**

June 18, 2008 -- <sup>30</sup> Downloading the National Indie Bestseller Lists -- Hardcover, Paperback, and Children's <sup>31</sup> -- in PDF, Word, or HTML format from BookWeb.org each week just got easier.

In response to requests from member booksellers, the American Booksellers Association has created a permanent URL for each list that can be used to download the most recent list each week. For example, booksellers can bookmark the Hardcover List in PDF format at <http://www.bookweb.org/files/open/files/lists/indielisth.pdf> <sup>32</sup>, and

each week when they click on the link late on Wednesday afternoon, they will find the latest Hardcover Bestseller List for download.

Below are the permanent URLs for each list. As usual, all current National Bestseller lists can be found at <http://www.bookweb.org/indiebound/bestsellers/national.html> <sup>33</sup>, and past lists are available at <http://www.bookweb.org/indiebound/bestsellers/national/2008.html> <sup>34</sup>.

Paperback PDF:  
<http://www.bookweb.org/files/open/files/lists/indielistp.pdf> <sup>35</sup>

Hardcover PDF:  
<http://www.bookweb.org/files/open/files/lists/indielisth.pdf> <sup>36</sup>

Children's PDF:  
<http://www.bookweb.org/files/open/files/lists/indielistc.pdf> <sup>37</sup>

All three lists PDF:  
<http://www.bookweb.org/files/open/files/lists/indielistfull.pdf> <sup>38</sup>

All three files in HTML format:  
<http://www.bookweb.org/files/open/files/lists/indielist.htm> <sup>39</sup>

Paperback Word:  
<http://www.bookweb.org/files/open/files/lists/indielistp.doc> <sup>40</sup>

Hardcover Word:  
<http://www.bookweb.org/files/open/files/lists/indielisth.doc> <sup>41</sup>

Children's Word:  
<http://www.bookweb.org/files/open/files/lists/indielistc.doc> <sup>42</sup>

All three lists Word:  
<http://www.bookweb.org/files/open/files/lists/indielistfull.doc> <sup>43</sup>

The URLs of the individual lists in HTML format will continue to change each week.

Regional Indie Bestseller lists are available as before at <http://www.bookweb.org/indiebound/bestsellers/regional.html> <sup>44</sup>. Anyone with questions about downloading the lists from BookWeb can send an e-mail to [Martha@bookweb.org](mailto:Martha@bookweb.org) <sup>45</sup>.

## **New York Asks Overstock.com to Consolidate Suit With Amazon**

June 18, 2008 -- Last week, New York State asked Overstock.com to consolidate its lawsuit challenging the state's Internet Sales Tax provision with an earlier suit filed by Amazon.com. The case, which will be heard in New York Supreme Court, is slated to begin on Monday, July 7.

On April 25, Amazon charged that New York's Internet Sales Tax provision violates the Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution since it "imposes tax-collection obligations on out-of-state entities such as Amazon who have no substantial nexus with New York." At the time, a spokesperson for Amazon.com noted simply that the retailer would comply with the Internet Sales Tax provision to "obey the law." On June 1, the retailer began collecting sales tax on orders made by New York State residents.

In a suit filed in early June, Overstock.com is asking for an injunction and for the court to declare the Internet Sales Tax provision unconstitutional, according to *The Albany Business Review*. In contrast to Amazon, however, Overstock decided to

drop its 3,400 New York-based affiliates rather than begin collecting sales tax on June 1. According to the *Business Review*, Overstock will most likely agree to consolidate its lawsuit with Amazon's legal challenge.

In the meantime, the American Booksellers Association continues to urge booksellers in the 44 other states with sales tax to write, fax, or e-mail their governors about this important issue. To make this communication easier, ABA has prepared a template letter<sup>46</sup> that can be adapted and sent. The association asks businesses that contact their governors to send a copy of the letter to ABA Public Policy Liaison David Grogan at dave@bookweb.org<sup>47</sup>.

Additionally, last month ABA COO Oren Teicher e-mailed the booksellers in the 21 states with the largest projected budget deficits as reported by the National Conference of State Legislators, to ask that anyone with connections to a state legislator arrange a meeting with the legislator regarding e-fairness.

"We will provide you with the necessary briefing, materials, and information -- and, in some cases, might be able to participate in the meeting with you," Teicher wrote. "It is imperative that we maintain our momentum and keep the pressure on." ABA is also in the process of preparing state-specific material to assist booksellers, available upon request.

Booksellers who have a legislator in mind, or who would like to discuss this issue further, are asked to contact Grogan at (800) 637-0037, ext. 6662, or via e-mail at dave@bookweb.org<sup>48</sup>. ABA staff can help walk interested booksellers through the process of setting up a legislative meeting and answer any questions about the association's Campaign for E-Fairness.

## Insights on Managing Blockbuster Events

June 18, 2008 -- "Managing Blockbuster Events: The Logistics of Events of 500 or More" proved to be a blockbuster event in its own right at the American Booksellers Association's Thursday, May 29, Day of Education at BookExpo America. Booksellers packed the spacious ballroom at the Renaissance Hollywood Hotel to hear veteran event planners Cristina Nosti of Books & Books in Coral Gables, Florida, and Alison Kothe Nihlean of BookPeople in Austin, Texas, provide an entertaining and in-depth look at best practices for preparing for events likely to draw more than 500 people.

ABA COO Oren Teicher, the moderator of the panel, began by noting that events of 500 or more people pose unique challenges: From insurance and security to line control and audiovisual and catering needs, blockbuster events require careful planning and thoughtful execution. In addition, Teicher told the audience that near the end of the session they would be asked to help provide planning ideas for a hypothetical blockbuster event.

Nosti, the director of events and marketing for Books & Books four locations, programs and promotes an average of 50 to 60 events per month and two to four of these will attract crowds of 500 or more. Noting that large events help to put the bookstore on the map, she said, "The biggest event I've helped plan was for Bill Clinton's *My Life*. We worked for months in advance for this event," the highlights of which she showed to booksellers via a slideshow. "It's hard to be an events coordinator," Nosti added. "You're hoping that nothing goes wrong!"

Said Kothe Nihlean, BookPeople's events coordinator: "It's best to surround yourself with people who aren't going to freak out or get

star-struck. You need a great team."

A large event begins with the request that a bookseller puts into the publisher. "You provide the publisher with a proposal," said Nosti, with a best-case scenario for attendance. "We exaggerate, and then we try to live up to it," she added with a laugh.

"And then the publicist will call you when you least expect it. The minute I get the call, I try to respond immediately. You have to try to see [the future event in your] imaginary crystal ball" to be able to answer the publicist's questions about the desired event.

Once an author appearance is secured, to keep on top of the myriad details, "I've got a flow chart with everything you need to think about. I share that with the publicist and the staff," said Nosti. "Our budget for events is zero. I'm trying to get everything for free." If a store wants food for the event, she recommended trying to collaborate with a local food venue. "Partnering is very important for us," Nosti said.

Some other issues to consider:

- **Event tickets.** Even if admission to the event is free, the more popular author events may require tickets and that brings with it a set of questions regarding logistics, including ticket distribution and printing. "People will need to pick up the tickets at your store, which is a good way of getting people to the store," Nosti said. "We design and print tickets in-house, so that involves printing, cutting, and distributing the tickets among the stores."
- **The book release date.** If the book is not yet published, Nosti said, then the bookseller will need to provide customers with a voucher for the book.
- **Event Publicity.** "One cost-effective advertising method is radio spots on an NPR station," Nosti explained. "The strategy is to get as much advanced publicity for the event as you can. The agony of any event coordinator is the question, 'Will people come?'"

For example, BookPeople's Kothe Nihlean said, "if you're doing an event with Ron Paul, can you work with a group that can send an e-mail blast to Paul supporters? You can include that in your request to the publicist."

- **Selling the books.** "You need to think about ordering, receiving, and delivering the books," Nosti said. "Place the order the minute you confirm the event."
- Kothe Nihlean said the store needs to consider where they will sell the books -- in-store or off-site.
- **Toilets.** At large events, ensuring there are enough facilities for your customers is no laughing matter. For the Bill Clinton event, Books & Books rented portable toilets.
- **Security.** If security is required, Books & Books usually hires an off-duty police officer.

Kothe Nihlean noted, "For high security events, there may be Secret Service, such as with Bill Clinton, and they will tell you how to do things."

- **Store Staff.** Keep the store staff in the loop throughout the process. "They need to know what is going on," Kothe Nihlean said.

- **Authors.** "Treat every author like a big author, because either one day they *will* be a big author or their publicist deals with a big author," Kothe Nihlean stressed.

Before you know it, the day of the event arrives. "Every event has its own karma," said Nosti. "Anything can and will happen at a given event, and the event coordinator must be able to go with the flow and respond.

Following the panel presentations, the audience was provided with a hypothetical scenario for a blockbuster event, and booksellers were given 10 minutes to come up with ideas about how best to manage the event. ( *See below* .)

For more about managing blockbuster events, ABA member booksellers can download the Managing Blockbuster Events session handout <sup>49</sup> -- featuring 15 pages of information on everything from choosing a location, staffing, insurance needs, security, P.R. and marketing concerns, and more -- and an Event Budget Worksheet <sup>50</sup> . --David Grogan <sup>51</sup>

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### Managing Blockbuster Events: A Hypothetical Scenario

It's April 2009. George W. Bush's publicist calls and says the former president wants to kick off the book tour for his tell-all memoir at your bookstore. Knowing this kind of blockbuster event will be huge deal for the store, you acquiesce.

Okay ... *now* what do you do?

That was the workshop question asked of the hundred-plus booksellers attending the session, "Managing Blockbuster Events: The Logistics of Events of 500 or More," at ABA's Day of Education on May 29. Proving that booksellers are quick studies, the novice event coordinators in attendance came up with the following suggestions:

- 1 Get more information from the publicist: Will this be a talk and signing, or just a signing?
- 2 Contact the Secret Service and find out what the rules for the signing will be.
- 3 Promote the event on your store website.
- 4 Order books. Alternatively, if the memoir's release date is after the signing, order vouchers.
- 5 Write a press release and distribute to the media.
- 6 Communicate with the staff.
- 7 Determine how the signing line and parking will work.
- 8 Make sure to remove anti-Bush items from the floor!
- 9 Ask the publisher what is needed for the event.
- 10 Ask if photos are allowed.
- 11 Do we have enough staff for the event? If not, seek out volunteers to help on event day.
- 12 The event could garner protestors and lots of media -- how do we handle it?
- 13 If the event is being held off-site, make plans to bring books and bookstore materials to the site.
- 14 Will the president require tea, coffee, or food? Does he prefer a certain type of pen?
- 15 What page does the president want to sign his book on? Pre-flap the book for the event.
- 16 Contact fellow businesses to let them know and ask them if they would like to get involved.
- 17 Since the queue is bound to be long, think of ways to keep people occupied while they are waiting.

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## ABA at Inaugural Meeting of Book

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## Industry Environmental Council

*June 18, 2008* -- Last week, the American Booksellers Association continued its environmental efforts on behalf of member booksellers by participating in the Book Industry Environmental Council's first meeting.

The meeting on June 11 at Random House's offices in New York City brought together representatives from a number of publishing houses, paper manufacturers and distributors, the Book Industry Study Group <sup>52</sup> , the Green Press Initiative <sup>53</sup> , and others to explore way in which the book industry can become more environmentally responsible. ABA was represented at the meeting by Education Coordinator Lisa Winn.

Future meetings are planned.

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## Don't Get Burned: Frauds, Scams & Stolen Credit Card Orders

*June 18, 2008* -- Crooks don't take the summer off, so bookstore owners and managers hiring seasonal help will do well to remind newcomers as well as experienced booksellers to be vigilant about scams and fraudulent orders.

To help booksellers in their efforts to thwart would-be thieves, here's a brief rundown of some frauds and schemes reported in the past by ABA members:

- Fraudulent orders from abroad or out of state for expensive medical and law textbooks, technical books, Bibles, and even frontlist list titles. Any time a bookstore receives a large order from out of state or a great distance away, whether it's by phone or over the Internet, it is good business to call the customer to confirm the order as well as the card number. Asking for the three-digit security number on the back of the card ensures the purchaser has the card in his or her possession. A call from a staff member who explains that, for the cardholder's protection, he is calling to confirm the order, will likely be appreciated by honest customers. Chances are, if the card is stolen, the phone number will not work or will be a wrong number.
- Fraudulent orders placed via teletype relay services (TTY) for the hearing-impaired. A typical case involved a bookseller who received a large e-mail order for medical textbooks, initially from a ".uk" address. The customer indicated that he would arrange for a pickup at the store. The bookseller ordered the books from the distributor and had several of them sent via airfreight to the store. The customer continued to e-mail and to call the store via a TTY connection, finally requesting a DHL delivery to a California address. Although the initial credit card was accepted, problems arose with the ensuing delivery and credit card transactions; the e-mails and TTY calls became more frequent and less coherent, and the bookseller determined that she was a victim of a scam.

Many attempted scams that involve the TTY service, such as this one, can be exposed by the store staff's use of a simple script <sup>54</sup> similar to one developed by Harvard Book Store. In short, the bookseller politely insists that the customer, in a conversation "relayed" through a TTY operator, give his or her full name, billing address, credit card number, expiration date, and security code on the back of the card. The customer is informed that verifying the credit information, through the card issuer, will take three to five days. This is usually adequate to foil most

bogus orders.

- Another scam involves receipt of tubes of "labor law" posters that have not been ordered. The posters depicting some aspect of workplace regulations come unsolicited, and some booksellers may be inclined to accept them without question. A more aggressive approach by the poster supplier involves a contact by mail or phone in which the store owner is told that he or she will be assessed huge fines if the expensive posters are not purchased and displayed in the workplace.
- A scam that's decidedly tailored to bookselling involves someone pretending to be an author who is scheduled to appear at the store, or who may have recently appeared, calling to request the bookseller wire him money because he is stranded somewhere. John Evans, co-owner of Diesel, A Bookstore, located in Oakland and Malibu, California, first reported this scam <sup>55</sup> six months ago, but just recently a New York bookseller reported being the target of a similar attempt.
- Check fraud can include a fake or stolen check presented as payment or a retailer's check made out to a vendor that is stolen prior to its reaching its destination. Staff manning registers should be trained to properly identify customers presenting checks for payment, either through personal recognition or signature and other personal picture identification. When in doubt, they should know to whom on the staff they can turn for a decision. Among the signs of a fraudulent check (as outlined by the Check Fraud Working Group, including representatives of the FBI and the Department of Justice), are:
  - A check on which the name and address of the drawee financial institution is typed, rather than printed, or that includes spelling errors.
  - A check that does not have a printed drawer name and address.
  - A personal check that has no perforated edge.
  - A check on which information shows indications of having been altered, eradicated, or erased.
  - A signature that is irregular-looking or shaky, or shows gaps in odd spots.
  - A check printed on poor quality paper that feels slippery.
  - Check colors that smear when rubbed with a moist finger. (This suggests they were prepared on a color copier).
  - Checks presented at busy times by belligerent or distracting customers who try to bypass procedures.

In the case of a retailers' check stolen prior to reaching the intended vendor, the perpetrator alters either the check amount and/or payee information and then finds someone who will cash the check and send part of the payment back to the scammer. A previous *BTW* article <sup>56</sup> outlined some check fraud tips from the National Check Fraud Center.

The inventiveness of crooks knows no bounds, so it's good business practice to be proactive: Teach staff that if something about an order seems fishy, it's store policy to take the time to look into it.

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## Becoming Green? Having Success With Graphic Novels?

*June 17, 2008* -- The American Booksellers Association would like to hear from its bookstore members that are having success buying,

merchandising, and selling graphic novels, as well as those that are developing and implementing green initiatives. Bookseller success stories will help the association develop education programs and materials to benefit all ABA member stores.

Any bookseller who would like to share their stories is asked to contact ABA Education Coordinator Lisa Winn at [lisa@bookweb.org](mailto:lisa@bookweb.org) <sup>57</sup> or (800) 637-0037, ext. 6657.

Members can also share thoughts and experiences, ask questions, and offer tips relating to ABA education programs via BookWeb's Education Forum <sup>58</sup>. Business forms and other documents can also be shared with bookseller colleagues via the forum's simple upload process <sup>59</sup>.

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## ABA E-Commerce Solution Offering Up Two New Promotions

*June 17, 2008* -- The ABA E-Commerce Solution <sup>60</sup> is offering participating bookstores promotional downloads for Scholastic's *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins and Random House's *Brisngr* by Christopher Paolini.

Scholastic has made the first chapter of *The Hunger Games* <sup>61</sup> -- expected to be a big fall title -- available for posting to the websites of all participating ABA E-Commerce Solution stores.

And Random House is promoting *Brisngr* <sup>62</sup> by offering E-Commerce Solution participants a spoiler video and an exclusive clue for its Rune Quest online game <sup>63</sup>.

These promotions are now available on all ABA E-Commerce Solution bookstore websites. Booksellers with questions about these promotions should send an e-mail to [staff@bookweb.org](mailto:staff@bookweb.org) <sup>64</sup>.

Publishers interested in developing future promotions with ABA's E-Commerce Solution should contact Mark Nichols <sup>65</sup>, ABA's senior director of publisher initiatives.

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## LIBRIS Revamps Website, Surveys Member Needs

*June 17, 2008* -- LIBRIS <sup>66</sup> (League of Independent Book Retailer Insurance Services), the insurance program owned and operated by the American Booksellers Association, recently revamped its website, making it more user-friendly for both existing and potential policyholders. The redesigned site, featuring enhanced graphics, provides comprehensive information about the insurance coverages available through LIBRIS.

"The new site gives visitors more in-depth information about what LIBRIS has to offer," said LIBRIS' Managing Director Richard Poling. "I encourage all ABA members to check out the new website and request a free business insurance quote."

The LIBRIS insurance program was formed by ABA in 1997 to provide business insurance coverage exclusively to independent booksellers. LIBRIS insurance is backed by Travelers, an A.M. Best A+ rated firm.

ABA bookstore members will soon receive an e-mail asking them to complete a very brief survey <sup>67</sup> that will provide LIBRIS with a clear picture of what independent booksellers want from their insurance company. Just a few moments of each member's time will help ABA and LIBRIS better meet the needs of all members.

More details about LIBRIS' coverages that address the loss exposures unique to bookstores are available on the company's

informative and easy-to-navigate new website at [www.LIBRIS.org](http://www.LIBRIS.org) <sup>68</sup>.

## MARKETPLACE

### Classifieds

#### BOOKSTORE FOR SALE

**Bookstore For Sale.** Well-established & respected bookstore just outside Portland, OR. Located in prime retail location of renovated houses. Espresso cafe and preschool as neighbors. Solid local customer base and great internet business with unique niche servicing customers worldwide with signed books. Turnkey. Owner selling due to family health issues. Contact: [larkr@hotmail.com](mailto:larkr@hotmail.com) <sup>74</sup> or (503) 475-5499.

**Children's Bookstore for sale in Bangor, Maine** . 20 years in growing downtown, owner retiring, and business needs new energy. Great reputation, quality books and sidelines. Inquire [catbriarpatch@aol.com](mailto:catbriarpatch@aol.com) <sup>75</sup>.

**Live the laid-back Coastal Carolina lifestyle.** Offered for sale is a charming 1,200 square foot bookstore located in a restored turn-of-the-century building in the historic district of Wilmington, NC. Solid 15-year reputation of quality customer service and community involvement with great selection of books, cards, and gifts. For details, contact [donead@aol.com](mailto:donead@aol.com) <sup>76</sup>.

#### POSITION AVAILABLE

N.J. based Fulfillment Company, providing services for most of the major publishing companies, seeks **Account Manager** . This person will be responsible for coordinating with the publishers, various promotional & marketing campaigns, etc. as well as supporting the sales efforts of these companies. The candidate will work with our in-house inventory system & have experience with MS Word & Excel. In addition, excellent verbal & written communication skills are necessary for regular interfacing with our clients. Individual must possess the ability to handle multiple projects at various stages, meet deadlines & thrive in a time sensitive & high-pressure environment. Fax resume & salary requirements to: (732) 698-0989.

Powell's Books, in Portland OR, is looking for a **Store Manager** for its stores at the Portland International Airport. The ideal

candidate for this position will have general manager or store manager experience in a fast-paced bookstore environment. Please go to [www.powells.com](http://www.powells.com) <sup>77</sup> to see the full posting.

**All Regular ABA Member Bookstores in good standing may have up to four 2-week Classified Ad insertions per year in *Bookselling This Week* at no charge (50-word limit). For more information on booking a classified ad, click here <sup>78</sup>.**

### Other Advertising

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Register now!  
Cobb Galleria  
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