

BOOKSELLING THIS Week

AMERICAN BOOKSELLERS ASSOCIATION

June 18, 2009

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An Open Letter to Booksellers From the ABA Board

June 18, 2009 -- Dear Fellow Bookseller:

We are writing to you today both as colleagues and as members of the ABA Board of Directors because of our concern that one of ABA's most valuable services has become one of the most threatened.

¹ We are talking about the ABACUS Financial Survey, a singular enterprise that has helped hundreds and hundreds of ABA bookstore members launch, expand, and sustain profitable businesses.

With the input of independent bookstores, the ABACUS Financial Survey provides a wide range of financial data and analysis, insightful and actionable data that have allowed booksellers to benchmark their operations and improve their business' bottom lines. Peter Schertz of Maria's Bookshop in Durango, Colorado,

said, "The ABACUS report is indispensable to the financial operation of Maria's Bookshop. I refer to it often... Our bookkeeper, banker, and everyone involved in our business operations is familiar with the ABACUS report." (Read more about what booksellers think of ABACUS ².)

Whether it's creating a business plan for a start-up loan or preparing to renegotiate a lease, ABACUS is a unique and powerful tool for success. In other industries, people routinely pay hundreds of dollars for comparable research, and ABA is pleased to provide ABACUS as a benefit of membership.

But the ABACUS Financial Survey will only continue if enough booksellers submit their financial data -- via a completely secure and confidential electronic form ³ -- to this year's project before the August 15 deadline. The unsettling fact is that we saw sharp declines in bookstore participation for the 2007 and 2008 surveys, after strong growth in submissions in the previous three years. If bookstore participation does not increase significantly this year, the project's future is threatened.

As booksellers, we understand some of the concerns that might stand in the way of participation. First, we want to categorically state that all ABACUS submissions are completely confidential. We are delighted to announce that Avin Mark Domnitz, ABA's former CEO and a well-known expert in bookstore finances, who relaunched ABACUS for us some years ago, is continuing to assist ABA on this important project. Avin will be the only person who will see any individual store's numbers. In addition, in a deep recession such as this, we understand that some booksellers may be reluctant to share financial results. But the truth is that the value of ABACUS only increases in tough times.

In a financial landscape that has become far more challenging, the business roadmap that ABACUS provides is essential. But it can only be created if together more of us make the decision to participate. Please, don't assume that other booksellers will be the ones to help sustain this incredibly important resource. Join with them today. Completing the easy-to-use ABACUS online form takes about an hour. An Excel spreadsheet will let you organize the required information from your financial statements so that it matches the categories on the ABACUS form. And, again, all information provided to ABACUS is kept strictly confidential.

Here's a link to more information and the submission form ⁴. Please, do submit your numbers before the August 15 deadline and help ensure that ABACUS continues as the essential tool it is. And if you have any questions, please click here ⁵.

And thank you very much!

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IndieBound.org Introduces New Book Lists, Widgets

June 18, 2009 --

This week, IndieBound.org launched several exciting new features for consumers and booksellers that focus on indie bookstores and spreading the word about great books. ¹⁵ IndieBound.org's new Book Lists ¹⁶ build on the Wish List functionality ¹⁷ introduced during the 2008 holiday season. Each IndieBound community member can now have an unlimited number of lists, and each list can be given its own name and description.

"The description field is a great place to add a ship-to address, tax-deductible information, or book group meeting dates," said Web Content Coordinator Matt Supko. "These are all requests we've had from member bookstores as well as from consumers, and

we designed these new lists to be flexible enough to accommodate all the different ways people have found to use IndieBound.org."

A new Book List Builder, which enables users to build lists faster than ever, has also been introduced. The List Builder includes a search field on the left side of the page to look up books by title, author, or ISBN, as well as a queue of books already on the list on the right. Books can be moved up and down to rearrange the list, or they can be moved from one book list to another. Users can also add notes to any book on the list -- to request a signed copy, for example, or to specify the month when their book group will be reading each title.

Each Book List can also be shared in a variety of ways. The user can e-mail the list to their friends on IndieBound.org, or they can enter additional e-mail addresses to send the list to other friends and family. Each list is provided in a printable format for in-store shopping and as an RSS Feed that can be plugged into any feed reader or Facebook widget. Lists can be added directly to any website or blog using new Book Widgets ¹⁸. Like YouTube videos or Google ads, these widgets provide a small bit of code that can be embedded in a website. Widgets can be created in a variety of sizes, with a completely customizable palette of colors, using the Indie Next List, the Kids' Next List, the Indie Bestseller Lists, or any custom book list. Users can choose whether the links go to IndieBound.org or to any e-commerce-capable store that they're a fan of. ¹⁹

"As all booksellers know, there's a certain magic that happens when you curate a list of books," said Chief Marketing Officer Meg Smith. "Its value is much greater than the sum of its parts. We can't wait to see the ways booksellers and consumers find to use these new lists and widgets. We think they'll form the foundation of something very exciting for independent bookstores."

See the latest Book Lists ²⁰.

See some early examples of the widgets in action:

- welikeithere.cartwheelmedia.com/ ²¹
- www.lcrw.net/ ²²
- chaoticcompendiums.blogspot.com/ ²³

Healthcare Debate Rages in Washington

June 18, 2009 -- With President Obama pressing Congress to draft viable and fiscally prudent healthcare reform legislation by October, the debate over *how* to reform healthcare has intensified.

At present, the only real consensus on healthcare is that some kind of reform is needed. From one side of the political aisle to the other, healthcare reform fixes run the gamut from free-market solutions to government-run healthcare. And each fix has opponents who fear that the reforms could bring any number of cataclysms, from rationing, unsustainable debt, tax increases, to, perhaps worst of all, just more of the same.

Last week, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, chaired by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA), introduced the Affordable Health Choices Act. While many cheered this as the first real step toward healthcare reform, a number of powerful business groups expressed concerns over the first draft of the bill, including the National Retail Federation, the American Medical Association, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The HELP committee began marking up the bill yesterday, according to *The Hill*.

According to a HELP press statement, the Affordable Health Choices Act includes five major elements:

- It will provide healthcare consumers choice - meaning that they won't have to change their current insurance if they don't want to, but the legislation will give citizens "new, more affordable options."
- It promises to reduce healthcare costs "through stronger prevention, better quality of care, and use of information technology," among other initiatives.
- It will give citizens information to "take charge of their own health" in order to prevent disease from ever striking.
- It will modernize the healthcare system and make investments in the training of doctors, nurses, and other health professionals.
- It will make it possible for the elderly and disabled to live at home and function independently. The act "will help them afford to put ramps in their homes, pay someone to check in on them regularly, or any of an array of supports that will enable them to stay in their communities instead of in nursing homes," the release noted.

The Small Business Majority (SBM), an organization advocating for healthcare reform on behalf of small businesses and the self-employed, issued a statement this week that warned that, without reform, small businesses will see their health insurance increase by \$2.4 trillion over the next 10 years, costing jobs, profits, and wages. SBM contends that "comprehensive reform that includes an employer contribution, with appropriate levels of tax credits, sliding scales and exclusions, will give small businesses the relief they need, potentially saving them as much as \$855 billion over the next 10 years, reducing lost wages by up to \$339 billion, and preserving as many as 128,000 jobs."

SBM reported that its opinion research shows that "64 percent of small business owners across the country support the concept of shared responsibility, and that most small business owners are willing to contribute toward a comprehensive solution that allows us to reduce costs and waste in the system while providing access to affordable, fair insurance for everyone." It is urging Congress to "craft the language that's win-win for small business, allowing this vital part of our economy to thrive and lead us into better economic times."

A number of business groups issued statements listing their concerns over measures in the Affordable Health Choices Act, *USA Today* reported. Some, such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, do not want a government-run insurance program competing with private insurance companies, *The Hill* noted.

In addition, the National Association of Manufacturers wants legislators to remove a provision that would require most employers to provide health insurance to workers or else pay a penalty. In a letter dated June 2, 2009, to Senators Kennedy and Max Baucus, President Obama wrote: [W]hile I believe that employers have a responsibility to support health insurance for their employees, small businesses face a number of special challenges in affording health benefits and should be exempted."

Watch for continuing coverage of healthcare reform efforts in upcoming editions of *Bookselling This Week*. --David Grogan²⁴

Internet Sales Tax Campaign Enters Critical Phase in Four States

June 18, 2009 --²⁵ This week, ABA's Campaign for E-Fairness

reached critical legislative crossroads in four states where Internet sales tax legislation is under consideration. With fiscal years for many states coming to a close on June 30, the Internet sales tax campaign takes center stage in California, North Carolina, and Rhode Island, where Internet sales tax provisions are included in proposed state budgets, while in Hawaii, Internet sales tax legislation still awaits Gov. Linda Lingle's signature.

California

This week, the Northern California Independent Booksellers Association, the Southern California Independent Booksellers Association, and the American Booksellers Association strongly urged California booksellers and other independent retailers to contact their state Assemblymember and Senator as soon as possible to ask them to support the Internet sales tax provision²⁶ in the proposed California budget.

To help booksellers in this important advocacy outreach, NCIBA, SCIBA, and ABA prepared a template letter²⁷ that can be adapted and sent to their elected officials. (Find California state assemblymembers²⁸. Find California state senators²⁹.) NCIBA, SCIBA, and ABA also ask that booksellers notify David Grogan³⁰, ABA public policy liaison, when they have sent their letters. This will help NCIBA, SCIBA, and ABA compile information to support this lobbying effort.

Hawaii

This week, ABA CEO Oren Teicher wrote to Gov. Linda Lingle and urged her to sign HB 1405, legislation that would clarify the state's general excise tax so that out-of-state retailers with online affiliates would be required to collect and remit sales tax. The legislation³¹ is modeled after the New York State bill that went into law last year.

Teicher wrote: "The time for Hawaii to act is now. The results of general excise tax inequity can be seen in the many empty storefronts on Main Streets throughout Hawaii. Sometimes, however, it doesn't result in a store closure, but, rather, in lost general excise tax through decreased sales and lost income tax through job cuts. A downturn on Main Street creates a ripple effect that is felt throughout the state's economy. In the end, it's the residents of Hawaii who shoulder this burden through higher property or school taxes. So it's important to understand that when out-of-state retailers with affiliates in your state shirk their responsibility to collect and remit general excise tax, it doesn't just affect a few small businesses here or there, it hurts the state's entire economy."

North Carolina

This week, four North Carolina booksellers exhorted their bookseller colleagues in the state to urge their legislators and chairs of the state Senate and House of Representatives Conference Committees to support an Internet sales tax provision in the state's Appropriations Act of 2009.

In an e-mail to North Carolina booksellers, Sally Brewster of Park Road Books³² in Charlotte, Tom Campbell of The Regulator Bookshop³³ in Durham, Linda Barrett Knopp of Malaprop's Bookstore/Cafe³⁴ in Asheville, and Nancy Olson of Quail Ridge Books & Music³⁵ in Raleigh, wrote: "[The Internet sales tax provision] is great news for indie booksellers, but we need to make sure that this provision remains in the budget as the conference committee readies the bill for the governor's signature. Please join with us, SIBA, and ABA, in this important effort. We are writing to you as fellow booksellers because we believe that there exists a real

opportunity for us to make a difference -- and we'd be remiss if we didn't stress this point."

To help booksellers in this important advocacy outreach, the Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance and ABA have prepared a template letter ³⁶ that booksellers can adapt and send to their senator ³⁷, and representative ³⁸, and House and Senate Conference Committee chairs ³⁹. ABA and SIBA also ask booksellers to notify David Grogan ⁴⁰, ABA public policy liaison, when they have sent their letter. This will help both SIBA and ABA compile information to support their sales tax lobbying efforts.

Rhode Island

This week, the New England Independent Booksellers Association and ABA contacted Rhode Island bookstore members to strongly urge them to contact their legislators as soon as possible and ask them to support Internet sales tax legislation that is now a provision in Rhode Island's budget.

To help booksellers in this important advocacy outreach, NEIBA and ABA prepared a template letter ⁴¹ that booksellers can adapt and send to their legislators. Booksellers can find their Rhode Island state representative here ⁴² and their senators here ⁴³. ABA also asks booksellers to notify NEIBA ⁴⁴ and David Grogan ⁴⁵, ABA public policy liaison, when they have sent their letters. This will help both NEIBA and ABA compile information to support their sales tax lobbying efforts.

Neil Gaiman's Indie Halloween Party Plan

June 18, 2009 -- Last Friday, on his blog, Neil Gaiman's Journal ⁴⁶, the winner of the 2009 Indies Choice Book Award ⁴⁷ for Best Indie Young Adult Buzz Book (*The Graveyard Book*, HarperCollins) offered more details on the contest he announced, to the surprise of his publisher, at ABA's Celebration of Bookselling ⁴⁸. Gaiman came up with the Halloween Party Plan in response to the many independent booksellers across the country who would love to host *Graveyard Book* signings in their stores. There are so many, he said, he couldn't possibly accommodate them all.

⁴⁹ On his blog, Gaiman outlined some of details of the contest open to bookstores in the U.S. and Canada: "It's open to independent bookshops. I'm not going to try and define indies for this. Big chains (Borders, B&N, Chapters, etc.) are out, because you're much more likely to get me anyway when a book comes out. But this one goes from tiny one-person independent bookshops a long way from anywhere up to huge monstrous shops that occupy city blocks. What counts is Independence (and, for the competition, enthusiasm)."

The in-store Halloween Party, themed around *The Graveyard Book*, can be held anytime in October, and just how a store does it is entirely open, said Gaiman, who did, however, offer some tips: "Decorate with headstones, or give awards to people who come as characters from the book, or have competitions for making epitaphs, or make graves of cake, or ... well, honestly, this is your call. It's your *Graveyard Book* party."

Booksellers can document the party with photos and/or video, said Gaiman, and HarperCollins will be the judge. (Details of how and to whom documentation should be sent will be posted closer to the event.)

The winner will be announced no later than November 15, Gaiman said, and "then, in December 2009, I'll turn up on a

mutually-agreed day, pens at the ready, to do a reading and an *Odd and the Frost Giants* signing for the winning store. The ten runners-up will get signed posters and books and stuff."

To sum up, he said, "I'll ask HarperChildren's to do a slightly more officially approved version of this, but that's the plan."

Read more about Halloween party plan on Neil Gaiman's Journal (see the entry for Friday, June 12) ⁵⁰.

ABA's Smith to Tweet From Conference Down Under

June 18, 2009 -- ABA Chief Marketing Officer Meg Smith is on her way to Australia as a guest of the Australian Booksellers Association ⁵¹. Smith was invited to be a keynote speaker at the organization's 85th Annual Conference to be held in Sydney from Sunday, June 21, though Tuesday, June 23. The invitation came from Australian Booksellers Association CEO Malcolm Neil and President Fiona Stager (Avid Reader ⁵²).

In a statement to Australia's *Weekly Book Newsletter* ⁵³ Neil said, "Meg is the Chief Marketing Officer of the American Booksellers Association and has responsibility for their Indiebound project (www.indiebound.org ⁵⁴), one of the most innovative and modern bookseller campaigns in the world. Meg will connect to the conference's focus on the future of the books, bookselling, and the importance of community, and her input will be useful to all booksellers."

Before she left on her journey on Wednesday, Smith told *BTW* that her conversations with the Aussie ABA began with indie booksellers Derek Dryden (Better Read Than Dead ⁵⁵) and John Page (Pages and Pages ⁵⁶) who were interested in learning how IndieBound might apply in Australia.

"The theme of the Australian conference is Selling the Future of the Book, and I will be giving a talk on the U.S. book market generally, and IndieBound specifically," said Smith, who added that she hopes to have the opportunity to meet with the Sydney Chamber of Commerce and other groups to discuss Local First issues. Smith will also be attending the Australian Book Awards ceremony, and, of course, her trip wouldn't be complete without visits to some of Sydney's local independent bookstores.

Smith plans to tweet about her experiences starting soon. You can follow her adventures at IndieBoundMeg ⁵⁷.

Watch for a full report in *BTW* when Smith returns to the U.S.

Small Businesses Can Now Apply for ARC Loans

June 17, 2009 -- ⁵⁸ On June 15, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) began accepting loans for a temporary new program called America's Recovery Capital (ARC). ARC loans of up to \$35,000 are designed to give viable small businesses suffering immediate financial hardship some temporary financial relief so they can keep their doors open and get their cash flow back on track. The loans will be available through SBA-approved lenders as long as funding is available or through September 30, 2010, whichever comes first.

"These ARC loans are another tool in the SBA toolkit which will provide critical support to small businesses struggling to make it through these tough economic times," said Administrator Karen G. Mills in a statement.

"We are urging any ABA member with an interest in pursuing an ARC loan to put the wheels in motion now," said ABA CEO Oren Teicher, "as there is a limit to how many ARC loans the government will provide."

Teicher also recommended that bookstores with questions regarding the loan process contact a local SCORE counselor. SCORE, an SBA resource partner, offers counseling to small business owners and is free to join. At SCORE's homepage ⁵⁹, a bookseller can simply type in "SBA loan," choose their state from a drop-down menu, and they will be provided with a list of SCORE mentors who will help guide them through the loan process.

Information on the ARC loan program is available at www.sba.gov/recovery/arclloanprogram/index.html ⁶⁰.

Booksellers who would like to share their experiences with the ARC loan program with ABA should contact David Grogan ⁶¹, the association's public policy liaison.

Read last week's *BTW* story on the ARC loan program. ⁶²

Powell's Rethinks the Newsletter, Saves Cash, Extends Reach

June 17, 2009 -- Early this year Powell's Books in Portland, Oregon, reevaluated its print newsletter. The stores' needs had shifted from promoting the Powell's website to increasing sales both in-store and online while cutting costs. The result is *The Powell's Books Reader*, a full-color eight-pager with a circulation of nearly 100,000. "We're spending almost exactly the same amount each month to reach twenty times more people," said Dave Weich, Powell's director of marketing and development. And the best part is that the store has already seen an uptick in sales on featured titles.

The original newsletter, *INK*, was developed in 2004. *The Powell's Books Reader* maintains the same monthly publication schedule and a comparable size to *INK* (9.75"x13.5"). Both pieces, old and new, include a full list of Powell's events and store information (locations and business hours, etc.), but that's about where the similarities end. "Basically, we're making a newfangled Sunday circular instead of a small magazine," said Weich.

Weich explained via e-mail how Powell's managed to reach many more people without a corresponding jump in expenses. "By switching to a lighter paper stock (similar to your typical, matte-finished, supermarket circular) and vastly increasing the print run (by a factor of 20), our production cost per unit has been reduced to a small fraction of what we'd been spending before."

The full-color cover is dedicated to a single title. Pages two and three introduce 10 to 12 frontlist titles that are discounted. The events calendar fills the foldout, middle pages. More space is given to new, non-discounted books that Powell's recommends. These books get face-out treatment with shelf talkers in store sections.

Increasing the number of advertised books has not only improved sales, but has also created many more co-op opportunities. "Coupled with our expanded circulation (more eyeballs on publishers' titles), we're able to collect significantly more co-op each month than we could in the past," Weich said.

The design of the newsletter allows for a streamlined production process. "In creating the new layout, we aimed to minimize subsequent design work that would be needed to produce each new edition, freeing our designers to work on other projects," he added. "Wherever we could devise a template (without sucking the life out

of the piece), we did."

Distribution has expanded significantly. Once a month *The Reader* is inserted into *Willamette Week*, Portland's alternative weekly. Weich said, "This means nearly 75,000 copies splashed around Greater Portland (the paper is estimated to reach more than 200,000 people when pass-along readership is factored in)." Copies are also distributed at the six Portland-area stores, and more are mailed to online customers in packages containing Powells.com orders.

Weich said that featured authors have been pleased with the coverage. And the publisher of *Willamette Week* sent along a kind note upon seeing the first installment: "I want to make sure you know how much I -- and everyone here who's concerned with these things -- appreciate your new *Reader*," he wrote. "It's incredibly handsome and a wonderful addition to our paper."

If booksellers have questions about reevaluating their own newsletters, they can contact Weich directly at dave@powells.com ⁶³. -- *Karen Schechner* ⁶⁴

13-Digit ISBNs Become Unavoidable

June 17, 2009 -- This month's announcement by the International ISBN Agency that the first 979-prefixed ISBN has been assigned to the Paris-based French National ISBN Agency has important ramifications for the U.S. book trade. "Any systems remaining in the U.S. book trade that process only the last 10 digits of an ISBN will have to be updated to avoid the possibility of duplicates of 978- and 979-prefixed ISBNs appearing in our supply chain," said Michael Healy, executive director of the Book Industry Study Group (BISG) and former chairman of the ISO working group that revised the ISBN standard, in a statement ⁶⁵.

The 13-digit ISBN launched in January 2007 to increase the capacity of the ISBN system and to bring it in line with the global GTIN identification system widely used to identify most other consumer goods worldwide. To date, 13-digit ISBNs have been prefixed by 978, which allowed systems to contain both 10- and 13-digit ISBNs for all books. However, with the introduction of the 979 prefixes, there can be no 10-digit equivalents for 13-digit ISBNs as this could lead to duplication of numbers and confusion in the supply chain.

The 979 prefixes are being assigned as larger ISBN agencies exhaust their current supply of ISBNs.

Educational resources, created in the run-up to January 1, 2007, are available on the BISG website ⁶⁶.

International Booksellers Accentuate the Positive

June 17, 2009 -- Last month, more than 30 booksellers from around the world gathered at Hotel ABA (the New York Marriott at the Brooklyn Bridge) in Brooklyn for the joint annual conference of the European (EBF) ⁶⁷ and International Booksellers (IBF) federations ⁶⁸. Booksellers from 21 countries, including Finland, South Africa, France, Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Russia, Belgium, Ireland, and Spain, took part in programs at Hotel ABA on Tuesday and Wednesday, May 26 and 27.

The international visitors also participated in ABA's Thursday Day of Education and BookExpo America at the Javits Convention Center, met with the ABA Board, and toured New York City bookstores. "All this has been made possible thanks to the excellent relationship IBF has with its member, ABA, and its very efficient

and committed staff," said Francoise Dubruille, the organizations' director. EBF/IBF booksellers wanted to examine how the U.S. book industry is changing, said Dubruille, who reported that member booksellers called the event "an important learning opportunity."

Taking the "Let's Stay Positive" theme of the conference's opening address to heart, the international visitors listened to presentations on the most significant trends currently defining the American book market. Insights provided at the session "Opportunities in the Digital Arena for Independent Bookstores," presented by Len Vlahos, then ABA chief program officer, and Mark Nelson, digital content strategist for the National Association of College Stores, underscored "the importance for booksellers of embracing the digital challenge and turning from bricks-and-mortar to 'bricks-and-click' bookstores," said EBF/IBF in a statement.

"Impressive and inspiring was the presentation on the multiple and far-reaching actions of the IndieBound program ... which offers to ABA members a vast range of promotional material to stress the vital importance for local communities of independent and locally owned bookstores."

Dubruille told *BTW* that she was greatly impressed by the professionalism of the speakers at the conference, especially "by their enthusiasm, their level of preparation, and their passion for the book trade. The evaluations that we are getting back from participants are extremely positive."

And, she added, "I must say that I have rarely seen such a dedicated team as the ABA staff who were of invaluable help in the preparation of our conference. I am immensely grateful to Avin [Mark Domnitz, then ABA CEO], Oren [Teicher, then ABA COO], Len [Vlahos], Kristen [Gilligan, director of meetings and events], and all the team!"

EBF/IBF members attended to business matters at their respective General Assemblies, also held at Hotel ABA, including elections and committee appointments and the adoption of a declaration in favor of a book-friendly VAT tax in Latvia.

At ABA's Day of Education, EBF/IBF said, the international booksellers "benefited from the many seminars, panel discussions, and presentations." Participants also joined American booksellers and many others from the U.S. book community at the Thursday night farewell reception for Domnitz, ABA's outgoing CEO, who had issued the invitation for the groups to meet at Hotel ABA.

The international visitors also visited the BEA trade show floor and had the opportunity to tour New York City bookstores, led by the Independent Booksellers of New York City⁶⁹.

PowerPoint presentations from the EBF/IBF conference are available for download on the EBF website⁷⁰. --Karen Schechner

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Kids' Booksellers Give It Away to Get It Back

June 17, 2009 -- Association of Booksellers for Children⁷³ (ABC) Executive Director Kristen McLean encouraged booksellers at the ABA Day of Education session "Give It Away to Get It Back: Using 'Thought Leadership' Marketing to Build Your Children's Business" to be themselves, to freely share their knowledge, and to become ambassadors for children's books in order to create a strategy that "cuts through the noise" directed at potential customers from innumerable sources.

These strategies, she stressed, should neither be viewed as a sales approach nor advertising. Rather they are key elements of Thought Leadership Marketing (TLM), which focuses on making the most of community outreach opportunities to build genuine relationships. "Thought leaders, McLean said, " are widely recognized for innovative ideas that they share broadly within their organizations or communities," and most children's booksellers are already, to some extent, doing just that.

Among bookstore services that can be considered part of a TLM strategy, said McLean, are professionally run book talks, teacher in-services for continuing education credits, value-added programming in schools, book review columns in local papers, providing space for local community information centers, and leadership of local programs, including Buy Local campaigns.

Customers today can buy books from hundreds of possible channels and get information from thousands of places, most of which booksellers aren't seeing, said McLean. So, "the same old thing isn't good enough. You need to figure out what your customer wants or needs." Key is creating a "perception of real value" and a sense of hospitality. "Customers must feel engaged."

The three keys to a successful TLM strategy, McLean stressed, are:

- Make education and information sharing core missions, not just add-ons
- Generously give away knowledge and share your expertise
- Create value for the consumer

Panelist Shelly Plumb, owner of three-year-old Harleysville Books⁷⁴, located in a very family-oriented community in Harleysville, Pennsylvania, said that she had focused much of her store's marketing efforts on children's books. Plumb partnered with a retired teacher to create programming that gives teachers continuing education credit. The program introduces teachers to books for children at all reading levels, she said, and explains how the titles can be used in a multidisciplinary approach. As an example she noted how a book of poetry was also tied into a science class. The bookstore, which had to apply to the state for program approval, worked closely with a retired teacher who was instrumental in helping them through the process of accreditation.

Teacher participation in the continuing education credit program also helps increase business at bookfairs, which Harleysville runs for pre-schoolers through elementary school grades. At the fairs, Plumb gives away catalogs and coupons so kids can go home and order online.

Plumb also cross promotes with other local organizations and businesses. In one instance, she has worked with an art studio, which does a theme a month. Harleysville provides the art studio with a booklist flier relating to that month's theme and promotes the studio and its programs at the bookstore.

McLean added, "A flier that you can exchange with another business is very cost effective." As an example she mentioned how one bookstore provides fliers with relevant titles to a pet adoption program.

To build contacts with teachers, McLean suggested booksellers ask for a table at a "new hire" fair. In this way, one bookseller has built a mailing list of hundreds of teachers over the last three years, she explained.

Diane Capriola, owner of Little Shop of Stories⁷⁵ in Decatur, Georgia, also stressed how important it is for indie booksellers to get out into schools. "You can provide a really quality bookfair," she said, with an emphasis on *quality*. "We don't include all of the

really junky things [that some bookfair companies do], and the kids don't miss them."

Although, she said, her store's school bookfairs "don't generate a lot of revenue, they do generate a lot of goodwill."

To bring indie bookstores to the attention of teachers and others in the local community, Capriola suggested booksellers provide summer reading lists, create or contribute to a teacher newsletter (e.g., how and why to use graphic novels), and participate in any community, family-friendly event.

"Store staff can become like rock stars" to kids, she explained, using as an example a program in which Little Shop of Stories staff become "mystery readers" at local schools. Students eagerly anticipate the arrival of the mystery someone who is going to read a story to them, and they're thrilled when a staff member from Little Shop of Stories appears. "Put [staff] out there, but not to sell," she encouraged.

Capriola also suggested those in attendance be willing to help promote other indies. When Atlanta's A Cappella Books was selling books in connection with an event at The Carter Center, Little Shop of Stories helped publicize the event -- a gesture of goodwill that didn't go unnoticed by others in her local community.

She also urged booksellers to "get in on ideas even if you think they might not work." As an example, she pointed to the Decatur Book Festival, now one of the five largest independent book festivals in the country. When the organizers who had no previous book festival experience announced their plans, there were skeptics, but the fair has grown into a three-day celebration featuring thousands of authors, booksellers, publishers, and readers. And, Capriola said, one of the most popular events is the Children's Stage.

Shannon Mathis, children's book buyer at San Francisco's Books Inc., told attendees in the three years since the store ramped up its bookfair efforts, bookfairs have become "a huge part of our business" and the store now has to turn away some requests.

As with the other indie panelists, Books Inc.'s emphasis is on providing quality, handpicked titles. For parents at bookfairs, Books Inc. offers booktalks featuring store staff presenting their favorite titles of the season over light refreshments (for example, Lattes & Literature and Bagels & Books). Three-hour in-store bookfairs are also offered, with profits donated to the sponsoring nonprofit.

Books Inc. staff also presents the titles they're excited about at "Teachers Night Out" events, where wine and cheese is also a draw. "Teachers are hungry to get authors in schools," said Mathis, so they are very happy to work with indie bookstores to make this happen.

An extensive calendar of book club events ⁷⁶, including several aimed at young adults, also ensures Books Inc.'s connection to the local community. There are Mother-Daughter clubs, a Middle Reader club, and the Not Your Mother's Book Club ⁷⁷ # aimed at 7th- to 12th-graders. "The goal of [NYMBC#] is to bring the best YA authors to the store to meet kids," said Mathis. And, as a result of these efforts, Books Inc. has become "a trusted resource for teen lit for librarians and teachers."

Learn more about Thought Leadership Marketing from ABC's "Give It Away to Get It Back" session handout ⁷⁸, available on BookWeb.org. --Rosemary Hawkins ⁷⁹

The Art of Handselling

June 17, 2009 -- Key customer service strategies, handselling tips, and valuable resources were the focus of "Handselling: Customer Service With Results," an ABA Day of Education session presented by Joe Drabyak of Chester County Book & Music Company ⁸⁰ in West Chester, Pennsylvania, and Avin Mark Domnitz, then ABA CEO, at last month's BookExpo America.

Drabyak began the session with a review of some of the basics. "We are the filter," he told booksellers. "So start off by reading all that you can." Helpful resources include the top book review sites, the Indie Next Lists ⁸¹ (a "collection of like-minded booksellers across the country looking at the same materials you are and making recommendations"), the Indie Bestseller Lists ⁸², *BTW*'s Media Guide ⁸³, industry trade publications, including *Bookselling This Week* ⁸⁴, *Publishers Weekly* ⁸⁵, and *Shelf Awareness* ⁸⁶, and bookseller blogs.

Handselling, Drabyak noted, extends beyond one-to-one interaction between a bookseller and a customer. It also includes the store newsletter, website, shelf-talkers, and representation on social media sites. And, for this content to be effective, it has to catch the reader's imagination. As an example, Drabyak pointed to a shelf-talker he created for William Lashner's *Hostile Witness* that stated, not only was Lashner better than John Grisham, he, Drabyak, would personally hand over a \$50 bill to anyone who didn't like the book. (He never did have to pay up.) After selling more than 4,200 copies of *Hostile Witness*, Chester County fine-tuned its handselling pitch: Drabyak did a little calculating and discovered the store could announce that it had sold literally more than a ton of the Lashner title.

Another proven handselling strategy, Drabyak said, is posting staff picks shelves in every section of the store. This has the dual benefit of helping narrow the selection for customers and helping staff members suggest books in categories in which they aren't particularly knowledgeable. The better booksellers are at creating relationships, either in person, or via shelf-talkers, Twitter, Facebook, or the store blog, the more customers will trust the bookstore's picks, Drabyak stressed.

To help familiarize everyone on the staff with as many titles as possible, Domnitz and Drabyak recommended having booksellers handsell new titles they have read to their colleagues during staff meetings.

Noting the high sales potential of children's literature, a category that might not be every bookseller's strong suit, Domnitz suggested that staff be given some on-the-clock time for catching up on kids' books.

Paying attention to customers is key to successful handselling. "How will you know what the customer wants?" Drabyak queried. "Ask them, what do you like? What don't you like? What book did you hate?"

"Good salesmanship is good listening."

Ensuring store staff has good sales skills begins with an employment interview, said Domnitz. "You want to hire people who love books *and* love people."

Booksellers at the session also viewed video clips of 10 potential customer service scenarios ⁸⁷, featuring dramatizations by the "ABA (very) Amateur Players." Best and worst practices were presented in five key areas, including upselling, what to do when a requested title is out of stock, how to stay nonjudgmental in possibly inflammatory situations, and more.

Two weeks post BEA, new bookseller Amy VandenPlas told *BTW*

that she'd already put the handselling session to work at Butterfly Books⁸⁸ in De Pere, Wisconsin, which she bought in January. Upon returning from the show, she immediately re-instituted the use of shelf-talkers throughout the store. "It's just something we haven't been doing lately, and it was good to be reminded," VandenPlas said. "They make it much easier to sell the book if you haven't read it."

For additional handselling resources, see BookWeb.org's Handselling: Customer Service With Results Handout⁸⁹, Workforce Development Checklist⁹⁰, Handselling Vignettes⁹¹, Autographed Copy Shelf-Talker⁹², Local Author Shelf-Talker⁹³, and Staff Picks Shelf-Talker⁹⁴. --Karen Schechner⁹⁵

BTW News Briefs

June 17, 2009 --

Ingram Content Group Announces Organizational Structure
On June 17, David "Skip" Prichard, president and CEO of the Ingram Content Group, unveiled the new company's organizational structure. The creation of Ingram Content Group was announced three weeks ago by Chairman John R. Ingram, who said the change would "fully integrate" Ingram's content companies -- Ingram Book Group, Lightning Source, and Ingram Digital.

"Rather than different organizations designed around products and services, we will now be organized around our mission statement of helping content reach its destination," Prichard said. "All of our services for publishers and content creators will be in our content organization. Our commercial organization will serve any 'destination' where we take that content -- whether libraries or retailers."

Services to publishers include Lightning Source print-on-demand, Ingram Digital's CoreSource, Ingram Marketing Group, Ingram Publisher Services, and Ingram Book's buying department. This new publisher-focused organization will be led by Chief Content Officer Phil Ollila. All of Ingram's customers in the library and retail channels will be served by one organization, led by Chief Commercial Officer Shawn Everson.

In the Commercial organization, Rich Rosy will head up all of Ingram's library businesses including Ingram Library Services, MyiLibrary, and Coutts. Dan Sheehan, vice president of sales for Ingram Book Field Sales, will also take on responsibility as general manager of Ingram Periodicals.

In the Content organization, David Taylor, president of Lightning Source, will be responsible for all publisher content acquisition activities. Mark Ouimet will become general manager of Ingram Publisher Services.

Booksellers to Keep Eyes Open for 2020 Vision USA

2020 Vision USA, a Sarasota, Florida, direct importer of reading glasses and sunglasses, has agreed to contribute \$1 to the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression⁹⁶ for every pair of glasses it sells to independent bookstores. Details are on their way to stores in the IndieBound movement in a flier in the July Red Box.

"We are very excited to have the support of 2020 Vision USA," ABFFE President Chris Finan said. Response from the 2020 Vision USA's partnering with ABFFE has sent sales skyrocketing for the father/daughter team.

A family business founded in 1996, 2020 Vision⁹⁷ offers a huge inventory of high fashion Italian designs. Its customers include bookstores across the country, including Books & Books⁹⁸ in Miami, which sells several thousand pairs of 2020 Vision's designs annually.

To see the entire collection of 2020 Vision USA, visit www.2020visionusa.com⁹⁹.

Cooperative Bookstore Planned for Milwaukee

This week, *BizTimes Daily*¹⁰⁰ reported that a group of Milwaukee community activists plans to open and operate a cooperative bookstore in Shorewood, the neighborhood of one of the Harry W. Schwartz Bookshops that closed in March. "It will be a bookstore for the community, created by the community," said organizer Keith Schmitz, who added that the closing of the Schwartz bookstore "created a big void in the community."

The Open Book will be structured on a cooperative model, giving members discounts, an annual dividend when feasible, and invitations to special events. So far, nearly 400 people have indicated interest in becoming members of the co-op, which plans to open this fall. Former store manager of the Schwartz store, Lisa Zupke, will manage Open Book.

S&S Children's Publishing Creates Online Community for Teen Readers

On June 18, Simon & Schuster Digital announced the launch of the Pulse It¹⁰¹ a free, dedicated social networking site for teens ages 14 - 18 where members can read new S&S teen titles online, communicate with fellow members of the site and with authors, and use a wide variety of digital tools to express themselves.

Pulse It members can read one book per month from a selection of two titles, which they can preview before making a choice. Books in the program will be just-released or soon-to-be-released titles, and members will have 60 days in which to read their selection.

In addition to allowing members to read entire books online, Pulse It members can create their own customized personal profile (including uploading a photo, adding their areas of interest and posting links to other media); write reviews and rank books; friend other members and track their activities; create blog posts and participate in message board discussions: vote on polls; watch video book trailers and author interviews, share reviews with Facebook friends, and set up RSS feeds.

Penguin Launches Network of Online Programming

On June 16, Penguin Group (USA) launched the online network "From the Publisher's Office," with three channels featuring nine series of book entertainment for adults, young adults, and children. The network will feature several episodic online series, including "YA Central," "Project Paranormal," "Penguin Storytime" and "Tarcher Talks," and audio series such as "Penguin Classics On Air," "Penguin Business Thought Leaders" and "A Cup of Poetry." Penguin said that all of the programming is original and customized for a wide range of audiences, and new episodes will be produced each publishing season. The network is now live on the Penguin Group (USA) website at www.penguin.com/thepublishersoffice¹⁰².

The "From the Publisher's Office" network also enables viewers to e-mail and share episodes within each series via a number of online and social networking applications, including Digg, Twitter, Delicious, and Technorati, among others. Most of the content for

From the Publisher's Office" will be created, written, shot, edited, and produced by more than 30 Penguin Group (USA) executives and department team members.

Redesigned BookTV.org More User-Friendly

On June 16, Book TV announced the launch of its "more user-friendly and intuitively organized" website, www.BookTV.org ¹⁰³. Book TV noted that the new design makes it easier to search for and watch videos; provides users with a "Share" menu; and streams Book TV programming live.

Correction

June 16, 2009 -- The July Indie Next List ¹⁰⁴ flier, on its way to stores in the IndieBound movement, misidentifies the name of the bookstore for the bookseller's quote for the title *It's Not Me, It's You: Subjective Recollections From a Terminally Optimistic, Chronically Sarcastic, and Occasionally Inebriated Woman*. The title was nominated by Sam Droke-Dickinson of Aaron's Books in Lititz, Pennsylvania.

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Liquidation of the Armchair Bookstore in Dennis, MA has resulted in sale of 11 **Franklin Fixtures bookcases of varying sizes**. All white and in like-new condition. Purchased 6 years ago. Dimensions and pictures available on request. Prices vary based on size. Fixtures currently located in Dennis. Contact Dawn at dmarie398@comcast.net ¹¹⁹.

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