



NEWSLETTER

January 2009

San Francisco Chronicle Adds TOP SHELF Feature to Showcase Independent Bookstores

Beginning on November 30, the *San Francisco Chronicle* added a new feature in its Sunday Book Review -- **Top Shelf**. The *Chronicle* describes the weekly column as "Recommendations of recent books from the staffs of a rotating list of Bay Area independent bookstores." Each featured bookstore offers short write-ups of five Fiction and five Non-fiction titles.

Top Shelf is the brainstorm of new *Chronicle*, Books editor John McMurtrie. He contacted the NCIBA office with the idea, and we jumped on it. We offered to handle the details -- contacting bookstores, soliciting lists, reviewing the lists for duplication, and making sure the titles, both hard-cover and paperback, were current.

Top Shelf comes on the heels of another NCIBA-Chronicle joint project, one we stole from our colleagues in Southern California. Every Wednesday, John McMurtrie sends us a list of books being reviewed in the upcoming Sunday Book Review, and we turn around and send the information out to our members (if you're not receiving the email and would like to, or you'd like to add employees to the list, contact us at office@nciba.com or 415-561-7686).

With the introduction of Top Shelf, we have added those titles being featured on Sunday to the Wednesday email as well. We are also posting all the information on our web site at nciba.com -- look for it under the Bestseller List tab.

Send Us Your E-Newsletters!

"Good Reads from Great Readers" To Debut Soon

The NCIBA is pleased to announce a new project geared to bookloving consumers. Beginning in February, we will produce a monthly newsletter comprised of 10-12 book reviews (with cover images) culled from member newsletters (with full credit to you and a link to your web site) -- please put us on your mailing list! Titled **Good Reads from Great Readers**, the newsletter will reside on a special page on our web site. We will invite consumers to submit their email addresses so we can alert them to a new newsletter posting (with the web link, of course) or, if they prefer, so they can receive a pdf copy directly.

We also will invite booksellers to offer people on their mailing lists the ability to 'subscribe' as well (there is no charge). We think the recommendations will make for good reading and be nice to offer your customers. In the interest of full disclosure, we also hope to attract enough people to the e-newsletter that we can sell advertising to publishers wishing to promote new releases to our 'independent bookstore' audience.

NCIBA News and Notes

Trade Show 2009

Something Old, Something New

Following this year's NCIBA Trade Show, which provided higher hotel costs (especially food & drink) and a lower exhibitor count, the NCIBA board and staff decided the time was right to review show dates, location and logistics. Over the years, the Oakland Convention Center and its 50,000 square feet of floor space has been a good fit for our show, but publisher consolidation and declining budgets have meant a shrinkage in exhibitor space in the past couple of years, to the point that we can produce the show in significantly less space.

The office also surveyed members to find out if a weekend show is really the optimum for booksellers. While there was no clear mandate, well over half of the respondents said that weekdays were as good or better.

That, along with new Marriott hotel ownership (and corresponding price hikes across the board) led us to wonder if Oakland remained the best choice for our show. So with the help of our exhibit set-up person, who has done shows throughout the region, we set out to find out if other reasonable alternatives existed.

Since the majority of our members are located within 50 miles of San Francisco, we opted to limit our search to the immediate Bay Area and forego cities like San Jose and Sacramento. In addition to a facility with sufficient floor space to hold our show, we had a checklist of things that were important -- availability during certain dates (we didn't want to 'compete' with other regional bookseller trade shows), nearby lodging, reasonable access to public transportation, and affordable costs.

As it turned out, there were a few facilities that worked size-wise, but most had other challenges. And when we informed the Marriott that we were actively looking around, the staff there reacted

quickly to keep our business. The result is that we earned some valuable concessions -- financial and otherwise -- that, coupled with the hotel's built-in advantages, made returning to Oakland in 2009 the best choice.

But there are some changes, starting with the dates. The 2009 NCIBA Trade Show will be held on Thursday October 8-Saturday, October 10. We've moved the show off our usual first weekend in October for several reasons. First, the New England Independent Booksellers Association (NEIBA) trade show is October 1-3, and we don't want to compete with them for exhibitors and authors. Second, the Hardly Strictly Bluegrass Festival is also presented on the first weekend in October -- I know this because it is pointed out to me by MANY people every year. Third, having the show a week later gives us potential access to more touring authors and finished books.

The other change you will note is the days on which the show is taking place. Although many attendees and exhibitors tell us that having the show floor open for two days (instead of one) is important, Sunday has been a slow traffic day for several years. So we're moving the show schedule back one day -- Education Day and exhibitor set-up will be on Thursday, with the trade show floor open for business on Friday and Saturday. We'll still have author events and social gatherings throughout the three days, and the Marriott's room rates will remain reasonable -- \$135 plus taxes.

There will be lots more to come in coming months, but we wanted everyone to know about the changes and the thinking that brought them about.

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Short Stories

Book Spree: A Rep's Self-Indulgent Christmas

The holiday season is behind us now, but I want to share my 2008 Christmas Project with other reps so that they might “go forth and do likewise” next Christmas. In a nutshell I went on an independent bookstore tear. In the course of little more than a



week I visited a dozen stores and bought nearly twenty books. I saw bookseller friends, indulged my own book lust, and acquired books for friends as a way of honoring the friendships. Knowing the interests and experiences of the latter

made buying books for them easy and fun., For two music lovers, Roy and Ed, I bought Alex Ross' *The Rest Is Noise*; for Sybil a Barbara Pym novel. There was *Mama Don't Allow*, a Peter Rabbit sticker book, and a biography of Babe Ruth for Jackson, Clair and Ben. Good cook Rosie got a copy of *Secret Ingredients, the New Yorker Anthology on Cooks and Cooking*.

The risk was that for every book I spotted for a friend, I found one for myself. Literary memoir being one of my favorite genres, I could not resist Gregor Von Rizzori's *The Snows of Yesteryear*. Nor could I pass up on a gorgeous anthology of Jim Marshall's George and Martha stories, a whimsical gift for a fast-approaching anniversary.

Still, I did occasionally manage to contain my avidity. Books on the history of the National Geographic and how Latin has influenced Western civilization over two millenia enticed me, but remain on the shelves of my local bookstore.

I remember hearing a story about two groups of people living on an island, one group dressmakers and the other cleaners. With the business they gave each other they all managed to get by reasonably well.

All year round and especially at Christmas we reps should put on our consumer hats and help our stores get by. It's in all our interests — and great fun to boot.

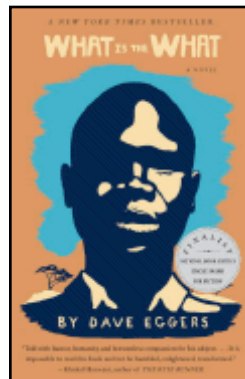
-- Dick Kolbert, Hand Associates

One Book One Marin Chooses Eggers Title

Dave Eggers' *What Is the What* has been selected as the 2009 One Book One Marin book. All Marin bookstores are encouraged to feature the book and recommend it to book clubs. Libraries

are planning lots of activities around the book in the coming months, and there are three public events scheduled as well.

The kick-off event is at Book Passage on Thursday Feb 5th at 7 p.m. when Michael Krasny will be presenting the award to Dave Eggers.



Following that, there will be a special event for high school

students at St. Andrew Church in Marin City at 7pm on April 22nd. The final event is at 7pm on April 23rd in San Rafael at Dominican University's Angelico Hall. The protagonist of the book, Valentino Achak Deng, is planning to come back from Sudan where he is building a school, to participate in the Dominican event.

All these events are free. Information is also available on the web at OneBookOneMarin.org.

SF Writer's Conference Coming in February

Jane Smiley (*A Thousand Acres*), Richard North Patterson (*Conviction*) and Lolly Winston (*Good Grief*) will be keynote speakers at the 2009 San Francisco Writers Conference where writers come to meet the right people in publishing, advance



their writing careers and become published authors. The event will be held at the InterContinental Mark Hopkins Hotel over President's Day Weekend, February 13th -15th, 2009. Full event details and on-line registration are available at www.SFWriters.org.

The 3-day program features best-selling authors, literary agents and editors from the West Coast and New York. Attendees can choose from 50+ information-packed sessions covering non-fiction and fiction writing genres, industry trends, and practical topics including book marketing and state-of-the-art author promotion techniques.

The conference registration fee includes writing workshops, panel discussions, keynote speakers, and information on traditional and self-publishing.

Booksellers Urged to Submit to New Book

Carl Lennertz of HarperCollins is still soliciting entries from booksellers and librarians for a version of Ecco's **State by State** collection. Here is his call for submissions:

"Send me your essay about any state you desire and we'll pick the best and publish all-bookseller + librarian regional versions in paperback in the next year, with a % of proceeds to ABFFE.

About 2,500 words and **by Word doc via email only**. New deadline is March 1, 2009.

But first, take a look at some of the pieces in the book now to see the flavor of what we're looking for, ok? Then warm up your Corona (typewriter not beer).

As you'll see, some authors once lived in the

state they wrote about, or do now, but some were sent to the state for a first, fresh look. I don't think you have time for the latter, but really, anything goes. Likewise, I'm open to pieces about parts of larger states. Email me if you have any questions: carl@harpercollins.com

Booksellers Upset by Oregon Court Decision

The American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression (ABFFE) has expressed concern about a federal judge's recent decision upholding an Oregon law that could restrict the sale of books, magazines and other materials to minors. In April, ABFFE joined six Oregon booksellers in challenging the law because it lacks the procedural safeguards that have been written into the laws of every other state in compliance with U.S. Supreme Court decisions. However, U.S. District Court Judge Michael W. Mosman declared in an opinion issued on Dec. 12 that the Oregon law contains provisions that offer comparable protections.

"We disagree with Judge Mosman," ABFFE President Chris Finan said. "We believe that the Oregon law does not provide the explicit guidelines that booksellers and others need in determining whether they may be committing an illegal act."

The law makes it a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail to allow a minor under 13 to view or purchase a "sexually explicit" work. It also makes it a crime to furnish anyone under 18 with a visual representation or verbal description of sexual conduct for the purpose of arousing or satisfying the sexual desire of the person or the minor.

Booksellers continue to believe that the law does not provide clear guidelines for determining what material is prohibited. For example, would it be a crime to allow a 12-year-old to view a book with a single sexual image even if it is a work of sex education intended for minors? Could a clerk be arrested for selling a romance novel to a 17-year-old? Without clear answers to these questions, booksellers would be forced to stop selling such material, depriving both adults and minors of works they have a First Amendment right to receive.

One President to Another

ABA President Gayle Shanks, co-owner of Changing Hands Bookstore in Tempe, Arizona, wrote President-elect Barack Obama and his transition team urging them "to ensure that the survival and long-range health of ... independent, locally owned businesses are a prominent part of [their] economic stimulus package."

Dear President-elect Obama:

I'm writing on behalf of the American Booksellers Association's 1,700 member bookstores -- now facing the worst economic environment in more than 75 years -- to ask you to ensure that the survival and long-range health of these independent, locally owned businesses are a prominent part of your economic stimulus package.

You wrote in your wonderful book *Dreams From My Father*, "Communities had to be created, fought for, tended like gardens. They expanded or contracted with the dreams of men."

In order to tend these communities, we must address the destabilizing combination of growing job losses, falling incomes, and shattered household wealth that has significantly damaged consumer confidence and short circuited the prospects for retail sales growth this holiday season and beyond. Given the enormous economic challenges the country will face throughout 2009, small businesses today are facing a potentially fatal environment. Locally owned, independent business is not only the web that ties our communities together but also the backbone of this nation's economy. If we were to go, it would make the breakdown of the automotive industry pale by comparison.

Access to capital is a central challenge to small businesses, and the liquidity crisis has only exacerbated this situation. We hope that the Obama/Biden Administration will work immediately to address the credit crisis that threatens U.S. small businesses by implementing steps you outlined during the campaign, specifically:

- Establishing a nationwide emergency lending facility for small businesses that can be run through SBA's Disaster Loan Program;

- Temporarily eliminating fees on the SBA's 7(a) and 504 loan guarantee programs for small businesses, to help increase private lending for small businesses; and

- Implementing a green economic stimulus package for small businesses focused on sensible steps to energy efficiency. This would pay dividends on Main Streets across the country far beyond the cost of implementation.

The continued financial success and growth of locally owned, independent businesses is important for many reasons, including the viability and health of America's cities and towns. While small businesses like mine and other ABA members don't have the resources to retain expensive lobbyists to plead our case, we do have a far greater economic impact on communities than larger, chain businesses; contribute more to local charities; and are largely responsible for our villages, towns, and cities retaining their unique characteristics.

Small businesses are, as you so aptly wrote, "Places where families might invest their savings and make a go of business, and where entry-level jobs might be had; places where the economy remained on a human scale, transparent enough for people to understand."

If the current downward economic spiral continues into 2009, the attendant losses of sales tax and other revenues will further widen the budget deficits of municipalities and states nationwide, which will only increase the demand for federal assistance in the face of spreading economic loss and pain. And, locally owned, independent businesses will begin to close at an alarming rate.

On behalf of ABA members nationwide -- and tens of thousands of other locally owned, independent businesses -- I respectfully ask that your administration move quickly and aggressively to address these Main Street issues.

Sincerely,

Gayle Shanks

President, American Booksellers Association

Year-End Bookstore Reports

Show Much Good News

In the midst of horrible economic times and glum news from chain retailers across the board, a survey of NCIBA members revealed a solid core of bookstores whose business is stable and in some instances even thriving.

Reports from nearly 50 stores representing a cross-section of size and geography indicated that 55% were either Up or Flat for the month of December 2008 compared to the same month in 2007. When looking at the year as a whole, 63% were Up or Flat (mostly Up) compared to 2007.

Some interesting details:

- On the whole, general stores did better than specialty stores.
- Of the stores in the Down column, over 80% reported single-digit losses.
- Several Down stores noted that they had been in the Up column through September.
- Stores from all three 'categories' made reference to the fact that 2007 numbers included sales of the last Harry Potter book, which made increases all the more impressive and single-digit decreases less traumatic.

- Many stores noted an inordinately large influx of last-minute shoppers in the three days before Christmas.

One of the questions we asked stores in the survey was whether any of their holiday customers mentioned "shopping locally" as a reason for their patronage. The answer, unanimously (not overwhelmingly or largely -- unanimously), was yes, yes, yes. It is clear that the Shop Local message is gaining traction with consumers in our region (and many others) and that independent bookstores are benefitting from shoppers' embracing this growing movement. With tools to deliver and reinforce that message already in place, our stores are well-positioned to hit the ground running when the economy begins to turn around.

In the meantime, most indies here remain stable and nimble. The bleak economy did unfortunately claim Stacey's, and a couple of small stores may follow suit. But on the whole, NCIBA booksellers are alive and well, ready to share their knowledge and indulge their passion in 2009 and beyond.

Publishers Weekly Awards - Call for Nominations

Bookseller of the Year

You've been impressed with their professionalism--from the front line bookseller to management--and you rank them as your favorite bookstore. Nominees should operate a professional storefront retail bookstore in the U.S. and excel in buying and vendor relations, marketing, handselling, customer care, community involvement, management-employee relations, merchandising and business operations.

Sales Rep of the Year

Whether you work together in person or by phone, your sales rep is a part of your bookstore business, someone upon whom you can rely for information, guidance and support. If a name and face come to mind, please tell us about your rep and what makes that person valuable to you. Share a story or provide an example of your rep's commitment to excellence.

Please submit your nominations to [Donna Paz Kaufman](#) by Monday, February 2 at noon. Or fax 904-261-6742. Include your name, phone number and industry affiliation. Candidates cannot nominate themselves. We request permission to include your nomination with the packet of materials used by the juries who will select this year's recipient. Profiles of this year's Publishers Weekly Award recipients will be featured in the pre-BookExpo America issue of the magazine and will be honored in New York during the convention.

Independent Retailers Outperform Chains Over Holidays, National Survey Finds

In an extremely challenging economic climate, independent retailers are outperforming many chains, a national survey has found.

The survey of 1,142 independent retailers in a wide range of categories (books, toys, clothing, etc.) and across all 50 states found that holiday sales at independent stores declined an average of 5.0% from the same time period in 2007. That compares favorably to the results of stores open at least a year of most competing chains, including Barnes & Noble (-7.7%), Best Buy (-6.5%), Borders (-14.0%), JC Penney (-8.1%), Macy's (-7.5%), The Gap (-14.0%), and Williams-Sonoma (-24.2%).

This week, the Commerce Department reported that December retail sales overall were down a record 9.8% over December 2007.

The survey also found that independent retailers in cities with active "Buy Local" campaigns reported much stronger holiday sales than those in cities without such campaigns. Independent retailers in these cities reported an average drop in sales of 3.2%, compared to a steeper decline of 5.6% for those in cities without an active Buy Local initiative. "Buy Local" or "Local First" campaigns have been launched in dozens of cities and towns over the last few years.

A similar survey last year likewise found that independent businesses in cities with Buy Local campaigns reported stronger sales than those in communities without such an initiative.

"Once again, independent retailers in communities with active shop local campaigns have outperformed retailers in cities and towns without such campaigns," said Oren Teicher, COO of the American Booksellers Association. "In the midst of a steep economic downturn, independent businesses have shown great resilience. Given the results of this survey, it's not a surprise that an overwhelming majority of shoppers are telling independents that the fact that they are locally owned matters a great deal to them."

The survey was conducted by the [Institute for Local Self-Reliance](#), a nonprofit research organiza-

tion, in partnership with several independent business organizations, including the American Booksellers Association, American Independent Business Alliance, American Specialty Toy Retailers Association, Business Alliance for Local Living Economies, Independent Music Store Owners Coalition, and National Bicycle Dealers Association.

Comments from survey respondents showed a growing awareness of the importance of locally owned businesses among consumers. "During this holiday season, many more customers mentioned their intentional shopping at local businesses," said one survey respondent. "I think that the tough economy this year played a huge role in my customers intentionally shopping locally. They felt strongly about supporting those of us who are sticking it out," said another.

Ninety-five percent of the retailers surveyed said that the fact that their business is locally owned matters to their customers.

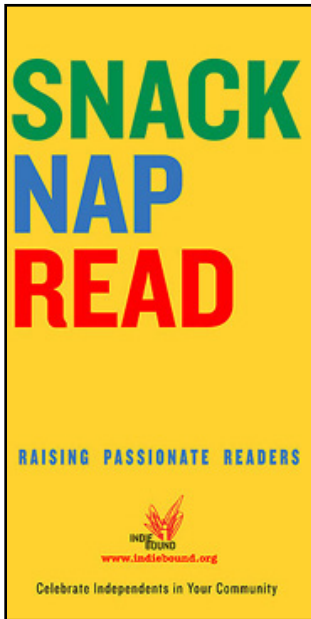
"This invaluable data is proving the case that communities are rallying behind independent businesses; [it's] a strong reminder that these entrepreneurs are the bedrock of a local living economy," said Doug Hammond, executive director of the [Business Alliance for Local Living Economies](#).

"Since the economic downturn began, we've seen an explosion of interest in communities looking to start Independent Business Alliances and buy local campaigns," said Jennifer Rockne, director of the [American Independent Business Alliance](#). "This survey shows such interest is justified. These campaigns are making a huge difference for local businesses and their communities."

"Even as household budgets shrink, many people are choosing to direct more of their spending to local businesses," said Stacy Mitchell, senior researcher with the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, which did the study. "This could be a key factor in getting the economy back on track. Study after study has concluded that locally owned businesses deliver more jobs and significantly greater economic benefits to their communities."

IndieBound Posters Available From Online Store

Seventeen of IndieBound's eye-catching poster designs are now available for purchase via a new online store at RedBubble.com. The American Booksellers Association recently set up shop with RedBubble to allow members without a viable local vendor to purchase high-quality, durable IndieBound posters.



Of course, all IndieBound collateral, including posters, banners, and handouts, remain available in digital format on IndieBound's Bookseller DIY. ABA encourages booksellers to adapt the designs to suit their own needs and to produce their customized items with a locally owned printer or accessories vendor. "Because some members indicated that they don't have an appropriate local vendor, we wanted to establish a convenient source," explained IndieBound Outreach Coordinator Paige Poe. "RedBubble is an independent Australian company operating in the U.S."

The 17 IndieBound posters in the online store are available in three sizes, ranging in price from \$19 to \$47.50. The full-color posters in a durable, vinyl format are delivered in 10 to 15 business days with standard shipping. Questions about the new online poster store and other matters relating to IndieBound should be addressed to Paige Poe, paige@bookweb.org.

Consumers who want to purchase IndieBound posters that they have seen in member stores can do so via the Gear page on IndieBound.org.

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