



# NEWSLETTER

January/February 2010

## A Challenging Year, But Not All Bad for NCIBA Stores

As the world breathes a sigh of relief that 2009 is behind us, reports from our members reveal that all was not doom and gloom. An informal but telling survey of stores found that just over half of the 37 respondents had higher holiday sales in 2009 than 2008. Moreover, 45% were up for the year, with seven stores even reporting double-digit gains over 2008.

Now we're not trying to paint an overly rosy picture here, and we are well aware that lots of stores are experiencing challenges. Our mission at NCIBA is to do everything we can to support our members, and we have our work cut out for us. However, the numbers don't lie -- many independent bookstores throughout our region continue to be innovative and successful, even in these most trying of times.

And as one bookseller's story reminded us, it isn't just about the sales. A store whose sales were flat nevertheless ended the year with \$100,000 less in payables than at the end of 2008! The owner considers that a pretty good year -- we agree.

Our survey also found that, whether a store's

business was up or down, consumer awareness of the Shop Local movement is increasingly acute. Every respondent said they had customers who talked about shopping locally, and virtually every bookseller thought that the heightened awareness had a positive impact on their sales.

**INTERESTINGLY, MANY CUSTOMERS** also spoke specifically about wanting to support the store to keep it from going out of business. Apparently, the closure of retailers, both large and small, across the country has gotten shoppers' attention. Also noteworthy were the numerous reports of consumers saying they wanted to support an "independent" business, using that word as a surrogate for locally-owned.

The survey also asked booksellers if their customers cited other reasons for shopping with them, and, happily, they did. Varying versions of "supporting the store" and "customer service" were most often cited, but "selection" and "staff expertise" ranked close behind.

For more good news about how independent retailers fared nationally, see page 5.

### Barnes & Noble Closings; More to Come?

Barnes & Noble has closed its stores in Oakland's Jack London Square and at Richmond's Hilltop Mall. Both stores had expiring leases and declining sales.

Will that be the end of it? Word is that Borders has several leases running out in 2010 throughout the region, so who knows?

# NCIBA News and Notes

## Office Changes Make Finances More Secure

2009 was a challenging year financially for the NCIBA as well. Much of our income is derived from publishers, and the year wasn't great for many of them. We ended the year with about a \$30,000 shortfall, due in large part to a drop in overall revenue of over \$50,000.

We're confident that we can stabilize and even grow our income flow, but we have also taken some significant steps to cut expenses. When Joyce left in August and we hired Carol to replace her, we cut that job from fulltime to a half-time position. Hut also renegotiated our office lease with the Presidio, and those two actions alone will save \$30,000 in 2010. We are also sub-letting a small portion of our office, a move that will net another \$4000 annually for the association.

## Bookstore Blog Links On Our Website

Does your store have a blog? We have links to 14 bookstore blogs on nciba.com, but we want to make sure we're not missing any. If you have a blog and it doesn't show up on our Bookstore Blog page, please send us a link so we can add it.

## 2010 Rep Directory In Production

We expect to have copies of the 2010 Rep Directory in the mail by mid-February. The directory will also be posted online at nciba.com, under the For Members tab -- call or email the office for the user name and password to access.

## Full Court Press for Sales Tax Equity

The NCIBA, SCIBA and ABA are partnering in 2010 to continue the fight in California for sales tax equity. The three associations have pooled



**Goldberg**

resources to hire our old friend Lenny Goldberg, the Executive Director of California Tax Reform Association, as a consultant and spokesperson on our behalf.

The Board of Equalization estimates that lost sales tax revenue from online retailers amounts to \$485 million, and we have created a tip sheet that gives examples of how that money could be spent (next page)-- it's a good conversation starter with customers and the media. Let us know if you'd like a copy.

The ABA has also just produced a fabulous E-Fairness Action Kit that offers, for those in California, template letters to the Governor and the Legislature, as well as a Find Your Legislator Here link (you just enter your zip code), and a brand-new Op-Ed template for local media.

<http://www.bookweb.org/advocacy/salestax/efact.html>

## NCIBA Now Using Google Groups

Following some difficulty with Yahoo, we have switched our listserve to Google Groups. You will be receiving an email invitation to join NCIBA Groups, and we urge everyone to sign up. It's a great place to ask questions about books or systems, announce fixtures for sale, find a good bag vendor, seek professional advice -- you get the idea. Look for the sign-up email soon!

# A New Way to Talk About Internet Sales Tax

**Online retailers that don't collect sales tax  
cost California \$485 million annually**

*So what could the state do with an extra \$485 million?*

- ✿ We could fix 300,000 potholes for \$15 million
- ✿ We could provide music programs to 2000 public schools for \$72 million
- ✿ We could hire 500 police officers for \$45 million
- ✿ We could restore programs cut from the state Office of AIDS for \$59 million
- ✿ We could give 8,000 senior citizens served by Adult Day Health Care access to two additional days of supervised care for \$27 million
- ✿ We could restore all state funding for domestic violence shelters for \$21 million
- ✿ We could provide sufficient rape kit testing funds to the state crime lab for \$20 million
- ✿ We could save the state's Healthy Families health care insurance program for children for \$126 million
- ✿ We could ensure that 220 state parks remain open for \$70 million
- ✿ We could guarantee funding for the Transitional Housing Placement program of Foster Youth Plus for \$30 million

**\$485 Million**

**Real Money. Real Help.**

# Bookstores in the News

## Reno's Sundance Books Gets Media Attention

The *Nevada Sagebrush*, the student-run weekly newspaper for the University of Nevada, Reno recently published a long story about independent bookstores in the Reno area that featured three local stores, including our own Sundance Books. The paper also posted a short video on its web site highlighting the store at: <http://nevadasagebrush.com/blog/2010/01/26/local-bookstore-unaffected-by-poor-economy-competitors/>

The article noted that despite the struggling economy, "many locally-owned independent bookstores have been prospering and are able to keep their doors open to the public, due in large part to loyal customers and special services."

Here's what they had to say about Sundance:

*Sundance Bookstore co-owner Christine Kelly credits her store's success largely to a knowledgeable staff of book experts and a loyal customer following. The store...has been locally owned and operated for 25 years.*

*"Anybody who loves reading should give independent bookstores a chance," Kelly said. "The people who work here have worked here for a long time. They're book people. They know the trends and are good at hunting and finding books."*

*When Sundance opened its doors in 1985, chain bookstores had not yet settled into the area, allowing the shop to carve out a niche for itself in the Reno community that it has maintained.*

*"The staff knows books," Kelly said. "They're a good resource and provide good service. Local businesses in general are important to the*

*community. We have the ability to be sensitive to trends and changes that are not all mainstream, New York Times bestsellers.*

*"I think people underestimate the passion people have for reading," Kelly said. "They say that people are reading less, but I still see people buying books, and buying good stuff to read... We just support the notion of conversation and getting a dialogue out there. Without discussion, it can be extremely dangerous for a group of people living out there."*

## Booksmith's Bookswap Has Great Write-Up

The fourth installment of Booksmith's Bookswap was written up in the local *Examiner* newspaper recently. The writer attended the event and wrote a blow-by-blow account of the unique evening.

Booksmith owners Praveen Madan and Christin Evans describe the Bookswap as an "interactive and fun social event to bring book-lovers together for stimulating conversation about books."

It was created as an alternative to the traditional author event and as a way for literary-minded people to meet other folks interested in books. And if the story in the *Examiner* is any indication, Praveen and Christin have a hit on their hands. The idea was clearly well thought out, and the event is nicely organized to ensure social interaction, a fun night out, and, oh yeah, book sales.

You can read the article by visiting this link - <http://www.examiner.com/x-24149-SF-Literary-Culture-Examiner%7Ey2010m1d31-The-Bookswap-at-Booksmith>

# Short Stories

## Nationwide Survey Shows Power of "Buy Local" Campaigns

MINNEAPOLIS - Jan. 14, 2010 - More holiday shoppers deliberately sought out locally owned businesses this year, according to a national survey of more than 1,800 independent businesses.

The survey found that holiday sales for independent retailers were up an average of 2.2%. That contrasts with the U.S. Department of Commerce figures, which show that overall retail sales were down 0.3% in December and up 1.8% in November.

The survey also found that independent retailers in cities with active "Buy Independent / Buy Local" or "Local First" campaigns reported stronger holiday sales than those in cities without such campaigns. These campaigns have been launched in more than 100 cities and towns. Independent retailers in these cities reported an average increase in holiday sales of 3.0%, compared to 1.0% for those in cities without an active Buy Local initiative.

Nearly 80% of those surveyed said public awareness of the value of choosing locally owned businesses had increased in the last year (16% said it had stayed the same).

"This survey adds to the growing body of evidence that people are increasingly bypassing big business in favor of local entrepreneurs," said Stacy Mitchell, senior researcher with the Institute for Local Self-Reliance.

"Amid the worst downtown in more than 60 years, independent businesses are managing to succeed by emphasizing their community roots and local ownership."

## *East Bay Express* Debuts Small Business Monthly

Kudos to the *East Bay Express* newspaper for its new publication, ***Small Business Monthly***, which will be inserted in the

*Express* on the last Wednesday of each month. Each issue features regular columns about the East Bay's retail scene, and the ways in which government policies help or hurt small businesses. There is also a monthly business calendar as well as a profile and feature story from a different business sector.



## Prospective Bookseller's School Held in March

Opening or buying a bookstore? Plan to attend the next bookseller school – **Opening A Bookstore: The Business Essentials** – March 15-19 on Amelia Island (near Jacksonville, FL). The week will include key topics from start-up costs and strategies for making a profit to choosing a computerized management system and selecting your opening inventory. It's an opportunity to immerse yourself in the book industry and will give you the strategies and contacts to help you launch a successful independent bookstore.

The workshop, offered annually in the spring and fall, is facilitated by Mark and Donna Paz Kaufman of the Bookstore Training Group of Paz & Associates and is co-sponsored by the ABA. For details, visit [PazBookBiz.com](http://PazBookBiz.com).



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# Book Award Finalists

The finalists for the 2010 Book of the Year Awards presented by Northern California independent booksellers have been selected, and ballots will go out to bookstores in late February.

This year's categories were expanded due to the plethora of work produced by Northern California authors and illustrators. As a result, Food Writing and Teen Lit have been added to the category list, joining Fiction, Non-Fiction, Poetry, Children's Illustrated, Children's Literature, and Regional Title.

The nominees are:

## FICTION

- The Vagrants** Yiyun Li *Random House*  
**Cutting for Stone** Abraham Verghese *Knopf*  
**The Writing on My Forehead** Nafisa Haji  
*William Morrow*  
**The Little Giant of Aberdeen County** Tiffany Baker  
*Grand Central*  
**Beat the Reaper** Josh Bazell *Little Brown*  
**Murder in the Latin Quarter** Cara Black *Soho*

## NONFICTION

- A Paradise Built in Hell** Rebecca Solnit *Viking*  
**Manhood for Amateurs** Michael Chabon *Harper*  
**West of the West** Mark Arax *Public Affairs,*  
**Zeitoun** Dave Eggers *McSweeney's*  
**Destiny Disrupted: A History of the World Through Islamic Eyes** Tamin Ansary *Public Affairs*  
**Trotsky: Downfall of a Revolutionary** Bertrand M. Patenaude *Harper*

## POETRY

- Portrait and Dream** Bill Berkson *Coffee House Press*  
**Where Shadows Will** Norma Cole *City Lights*  
**The Plot Genie** Gillian Conoley *Omnidawn Publishing*  
**Thom Gunn: Selected Poems** Edited by August Kleinzahler *FSG*  
**Chronic** D.A. Powell *Graywolf Press*  
**Sight Map: Poems** Brian Teare *UC Press*

## FOOD WRITING

- Righteous Porkchop** Nicolette Hahn Niman  
*Collins Living*  
**Farm City: The Education of an Urban Farmer**  
Novella Carpenter *The Penguin Press*  
**The Foodie's Handbook** Pim Techamuanvivit  
*Chronicle*  
**My Nepenthe** Romney Steele *Andrews McMeel*  
**Deeply Rooted: Unconventional Farmers in the Age of Agribusiness** Lisa Hamilton *Counterpoint*  
**Been Doon So Long: A Randall Graham Vinthology**  
Randall Graham *UC Press*

## CHILDREN'S ILLUSTRATED

- (Award to illustrator)  
**Long Tail Kitty** Lark Pien *Blue Apple*  
**Zero Is the Leaves on the Tree** Shino Arihara *Tricycle*  
**Dinosaurs Roar, Butterflies Soar** Bob Barner  
*Chronicle*  
**Night Lights** Susan Gal *Knopf*  
**June and August** Adam McCauley *Abrams*

## CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

- Banquet for Hungry Ghosts** Ying Chang Compestine  
*Macmillan*  
**Pharaoh's Secret** Marissa Moss *Macmillan*  
**Al Capone Shines My Shoes** Gennifer Choldenko  
*Penguin*  
**Dunderheads** SPaul Fleischman *Candlewick*  
**Islands of the Blessed** Nancy Farmer *Abrams*

## TEEN LIT

- Hold Still** Nina LaCour *Dutton*  
**Ash** Malindo Lo *Little Brown*  
**In The Path of Falling Objects** Andrew Smith  
*Feiwel and Friends*  
**Andromeda Klein** Frank Portman *Delacorte*  
**Breathing** Cheryl Herbsman *Viking Children*

## REGIONAL

*Finalists list still in the works as of press time.*

## New Personalized Print Newsletter Offer

Paz & Associates are offering a new bi-monthly print newsletter, personalized with your store name, logo, and other information, at a special rate for NCIBA members.

Each is a well-designed 4-page newsletter with approximately 20 titles. Each issue is emailed to you as a PDF, which you can forward to your local printer, so you can Buy Local. Cost is \$248 per issue for members. Plus, each issue comes with an average of \$750 of co-op (the Feb/Mar issue has \$1,000) available for reimbursement. That's enough in most cases to pay for the newsletter, printing, and distribution, too.

For more information, there's a link for NCIBA members on a Promotional page on the Paz site.

<http://www.pazbookbiz.com/Bookstore-Training-Consulting-Services/Customer-Newsletter.aspx>

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### NCIBA

1007 GENERAL KENNEDY AVENUE

PO BOX 29169

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