



NEWSLETTER

July 2009

Regionals, Indiebound Team With Workman to Produce Indies-Only Calendar

You may already have heard about this, but the nation's nine regional bookseller associations, IndieBound, and Workman Publishing have partnered to produce a unique daily calendar to be sold exclusively in independent bookstores.

The IndieBound Eat Sleep Read calendar features book trivia, recommendations, and fun facts for book lovers. The copy comes from booksellers and IndieBound, and the editing, design and production work was done by Workman.

The calendar is meant to serve several purposes, not the least of which is to make money for our bookstores. As with most Workman daily page calendars, ours is priced at \$12.95, but the price to stores is only \$4 apiece. Full disclosure -- at that price, the calendars are non-returnable and are sold in carton quantities of 30. Use it as a promotional item, give it as a gift to favored customers, or sell it at full price -- it's up to you.

And even though it doesn't service bookstores in the West, New Jersey wholesaler Bookazine has very generously agreed to handle all shipping gratis in order to maximize profits for bookstores. That's right -- free freight and you don't need to have a Bookazine account. In addition, Workman is donating a portion of each calendar sale to the regional associations, so your calendar purchases also benefit NCIBA. There is an order form on our website at http://www.sibaweb.com/pdf/esr_calendar.pdf. We urge you to order now -- the print run is 10,000, and over 3,000 have been sold to date.

The NCIBA will also have a limited number of cartons at the trade show, for bookstores that wish to re-stock or simply wait until October to purchase the calendars. However, we ask that you reserve your copies in advance, no later than September 15, by contacting the NCIBA office. For stores not able to commit to 30 calendars, we will sell copies in smaller quantities, as supplies last, for \$5 apiece at the trade show. In either case, bring your checkbook -- it's cash on the barrelhead, and we can't take credit cards.

OK, want a sample question? Here's the entry for July 22, 2010:

Can you name the two top-selling nonfiction books of 1985, each of which simply titled the author's last name followed by "An Autobiography"? One was associated with cars, the other with airplanes. (answer on page 2)



2009 Trade Show Preview -- See Pages 4-5

New Dates, Timely Education Sessions, Lots of Bookseller Interaction,
and Dozens of Authors (Including Two Pulitzer Prize Winners!)

NCIBA News and Notes

Please Welcome Carol Seajay to the NCIBA!

We are delighted to announce that Carol Seajay begins her new job as NCIBA Administrator on Monday, July 27. She replaces Joyce Ripp, who is off to South Carolina to be with her mother.

Some of you may know Carol from her *Old Wives Tales* bookshop, as publisher for more than 20 years of *Feminist Bookstore News*, and/or her *Books to Watch Out For* online newsletter. She has strong database and bookkeeping skills to go with her bookselling and writing background and has been a regular trade show attendee over the years. Carol will be working three days a week in the office and can be reached through the office phone or carol@nciba.com.



Indie TOP SHELF Lists Continue in Chronicle

As the NCIBA and *San Francisco Chronicle* Books section continue a collaboration that has spanned nine months to date, feedback from bookstores indicates that the weekly Top Shelf lists that appear in the Sunday book review section are leading to additional book sales.

“We’ve had customers come into the store with the book review section in hand and titles circled,” one bookseller told us recently. “And it wasn’t even a list from us; it was picks from another store.”

Other bookstores have posted their published Top Shelf lists on their website or emailed it to their customers to draw additional attention to their recommendations. Add to that the overall

value of having a different independent bookstore recommend new books every week and it seems clear that Top Shelf is a win-win for all.

If you would like to submit a Top Shelf list, please let Hut know at hut@nciba.com. There is no charge, just a deadline to meet and a format to follow.

We continue to be grateful to *Chronicle* Book editor John McMurtrie for initially approaching NCIBA about Top Shelf and for continuing the feature amidst the belt-tightening pressure he and other editors are under. We have copies of every list from the feature’s inception and are in the process of organizing them in an effective format for posting on our website.

Little-Known POS Law Now Being Enforced

The NCIBA office has heard recently from two booksellers who have been visited by local government representatives and told that they need to comply with an existing but little-known law. The edict states that any retailer using a point-of-sale system must provide a method of displaying the inputting of sales information to customers.



While many bookstores may already comply with this rule, the two who contacted us were not aware of it, and we suspect they’re not alone. And with local governments sniffing around for money wherever they can find it, we wouldn’t be surprised to hear of other ‘compliance’ visits.

The good news is that most bookstore POS systems have hardware available. We urge our booksellers to check with their POS provider to see what they offer. The cost should be in the \$260-\$275 range.

(Calendar trivia answer: *Iacocca* and *Yeager*)

Free, Confidential, and Profitable

The Importance of ABACUS

By Amy Thomas

President for Life, Pandora's Books Inc.

I bought my bookstores 13 years ago without any business training. I had worked in, and then managed the stores for several years, but apart from that, I was, let's face it, an English major. I had a boss who drew fascinating diagrams on tablecloths in restaurants, teasing out numbers and ratios in a dizzying stream of consciousness, and I absorbed some of those insights, but when I came to be responsible for the business I sometimes felt that I was relying wholly on rules of thumb dimly remembered from a dozen different sources. My rent seemed like a lot of money. Was it too high? How much money should we spend on advertising and marketing? Should I wean myself off the distributors and try to buy more books directly from the publishers? Years before we had set up non-returnable accounts with the publishers. Was that still the right way to buy?

I think it was that first year, or maybe the second, that I filled out an **ABACUS** report. I remember that it was with some dread that I plugged in numbers, because the words of the expensive accountant that my lawyer made me hire were still ringing in my ears -- "I would not recommend that you buy this business." I had paid his fee, hustled him out of there before the bankers arrived, and bought the business anyway, but had remained secretly fearful that he was right and I was wrong. Now this report would spit out an actual bottom line, and I would be stuck with the truth. Is it serious, Doc?

The report did spit out a bottom line, and it even went one better -- it showed me, side by side with my numbers, the bottom lines [in aggregate] of hundreds of other similar bookstores, so one could see in an instant where one's profit, and one's losses, resided. Literally. I was relieved that my business was in fact sound, but also saw very clearly on which threads its success dangled. Yes, my rent was too high, but not by much, and only at one location. My employee costs were much higher

than for other bookstores, but our lower cost of goods, attributable in part to our mix of new and used, and partly to our taking advantage of non-returnable discounts, really helped offset the difference. Our advertising budget could, and probably should, be higher -- perhaps a fun new ad campaign was in order -- and we could afford it. And this was just the first year. Every year since I have been not only eager to do my numbers -- a good refresher on the past year in and of itself -- but have been on pins and needles waiting for the full report that shows how we line up against other businesses, and how our efforts to improve our situation have fared.



Just one example: Being familiar with my business through my years of ABACUS participation meant that when I listened to Avin [Domnitz, former ABA CEO] preaching the 2% solution I understood immediately what he was driving at -- more than that, I knew what I had to do and how to do it. This helped us A LOT through a few tough years, and continues to help keep us on track once things eased up.

ABACUS is unique. It mines real numbers from real stores that are like my own. These are numbers I can use. These are numbers you can take to the bank. Does any other industry have this resource, so painstakingly maintained over so many years?

I would like to make a personal phone call to every bookseller in our association, urging them to please, go sit down with a few financial documents and give your fellow booksellers an hour that might help them keep their business. And if this appeal doesn't work, I may have to make those calls. So just do it. It is a seriously good business practice.

To report by the deadline of August 15, go to <http://www.bookweb.org/files/bookstore/files/abacusform/index.htm>

October 8-10, 2009, Oakland Convention Center & City Center Marriott

NCIBA Trade Show Preview

There is literally a new day dawning at the NCIBA Trade Show this year, as festivities begin on Thursday instead of our traditional Friday. In moving the show 'back' a day, we will have the trade show floor open on both a weekday (Friday) and weekend day (Saturday), offering bookstores more flexibility in sending key employees and store staff.

Thursday is our Day of Education and set-up day for exhibitors, and we have a couple of extra treats in store as well. Our education program will include two offerings from ABA, one dealing with **social media**, another on **e-books and other digital opportunities**. Also on tap is a demonstration of the **Edelweiss interactive e-catalog**, as well as a workshop on **changes in the credit/debit world** that impact every bookstore's bottom lines and an interactive session on **store leases** with Beau Simon, an attorney specializing in landlord-tenant relations. In addition, we'll reprise a perennial favorite, **bookstore roundtables**.

Workshop attendees won't want to miss lunch on Thursday, as we present a special program -- **In Conversation with Nick Hornby**. The popular author will be interviewed by NCIBA president Michael Barnard, and we hope to have copies of his new novel *Juliet, Naked* for those on hand.



Nick Hornby

Following the education sessions, we'll hold our Annual Membership Meeting in AJ Toppers, just prior to our Welcome Reception (all invited) and a talk by long-time *San Francisco Chronicle* arts writer **Steven Winn**, author of *Come Back, Como: Winning the*

Heart of a Reluctant Dog.

Since it's being held on Friday, our traditional adult author breakfast has been moved to a 9:30 start time and will feature more of a brunch menu. We want to mitigate potential morning traffic snags because this is an event you won't want to miss, featuring not one but two Pulitzer Prize-winning

writers -- Timothy Egan (*The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire That Saved America*) and Richard Russo (*That Old Cape Magic*). They'll be joined by Jonathan Safran Foer (*Eating Animals*). How's that for a lineup?

By the way, tickets for both this event and the Children's Author Breakfast on Saturday will cost \$30, with all attendees receiving pre-signed copies of the featured books at the event -- no more waiting in line on the show floor! And \$3 of your ticket price will be put toward our ABFFE book-signing donation. We will also ask authors to stay to personalize copies directly after the program.



Timothy Egan

Meanwhile, the trade show floor will open at 10am and close at 4pm. We are using a different entrance to the Oakland Convention Center, so our Registration area will be in a slightly different location. Don't worry, they'll be plenty visible. We also have modified the layout of the show floor; instead of long, extended islands with 10-12 tables, you'll find mostly square, six-table islands and what we hope will be a more open feel to the room. Also, we are foregoing our Author Autographing space and will hold all signings at the exhibitor booths and tables.



Richard Russo

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Hut Landon, Executive Director
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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA INDEPENDENT BOOKSELLERS ASSOCIATION

Once the show floor closes on Friday, we will hold a Rep Picks session patterned after last year's much-praised format -- ten sales reps presenting their favorite books in five pre-selected categories. It promises to be informative and fast-moving, and we'll have coffee and treats to boot.

For those who do not participate in or attend the Rep Picks session, we will host our annual cocktail party in AJ Toppers from 4-6pm. It's a chance to relax after a long day, catch up with friends, and enjoy hors d'oeuvres and a wine, beer, soda, or water on us.

But the day's not over. From 6-7:30pm, our NCIBA Author Reception will take place in the Simmons Ballroom. After only two years, this event has become one of the show's most popular, and why not? Twenty-two invited authors signing books and meeting over 125 booksellers, with everyone

enjoying a great food spread and free wine, beer, and soda. The wine being served, by the way, is courtesy of Santa Cruz's Bonny Doon Vineyard and owner **Randall Graham**, author of *Been Doon So Long* from UC Press.

As for this year's authors, we've got a great list representing fiction and non-fiction, adult and children's genres, experienced

and first-time writers. We are still finalizing the invited authors, but here are the confirmed names to date, in alphabetical order:

Allison Bartlett - *The Man Who Loved Books Too Much*

Gabrielle Burton - *Impatient with Desire*

Terry Castle - *The Professor & Other Writings*

Gennifer Choldenko - *Al Capone Shines My Shoes*

Chitra Divakaruni - *One Amazing Thing*

Joshua Ferris - *The Unnamed*

Maria Finn - *Embraceable Me*

Elizabeth Singer Hunt - *Secret Agent Jack Stahwart*

Jim LaMarche - *Lost and Found: Three Dog Stories*

Kathy Lamb - *Henry's Sisters*

Lisa Lutz - *The Spellmans Strike Again*



Berkeley Breathed

Joyce Maynard - *Labor Day*

Cornelia Nixon - *Jarrettsville*

Rob Reger - *Emily the Strange: Stranger and Strange*

James Rollins - *The Doomsday Key*

Joan Ryan - *The Water Giver*

Richard Sala - *Cat Burgler Black*

Stephen Jay Schwartz - *Boulevard*

Patrick Taylor - *Irish Country Christmas*

Cami Walker - *29 Gifts*

Saturday will begin with our Children's Author Breakfast, featuring **Nancy Farmer** (*The Islands of the Blessed*), **Berkeley**

Breathed (*Flawed Dogs*), and a third author to be announced.

After breakfast, we'll be offering a Children's Rep Picks session from 10-11am in AJ Topper's.

The show floor will be open from 10am-3pm, and we will do our annual Cookbook

Celebration in the early afternoon. We are still have invites out, but at this point we will be offering recipe samples from the following cookbooks:

My Nepenthe by Romney Steele (Andrews McMeel)

The Bryant Family Vineyard Cookbook by Betsy Fentress (Andrews McMeel)

I Know How to Cook by Micaela Lade (Phaidon)

Get Cooking by Mollie Katzen (HarperStudio)

Make It Fast, Cook It Slow by Stephanie O'Dea (Hyperion) - *author will be in attendance*

So, think you can make it? We'll have Attendee packets in the mail and posted on our web site soon, so for now mark the dates and start making your plans.

The special room rate at the Oakland City Center Marriott of \$135 (plus tax) is being offered through September 16, but reserving your room nights sooner than later is always recommended. Call 800-991-7249 between 6am-11pm and identify yourself as part of the Northern California Independent Booksellers Association in order to receive the Group Rate. You can also access the the hotel website at Marriott.com/oakdt and use the group code NCINCIA to access our rate.



Nancy Farmer

Internet Sales Tax - Down But Not Out

Dear California Booksellers:

As you know, California's budget agreement does not include a provision that makes clear that out-of-state online retailers with nexus in the state via online affiliates must follow existing state law and collect sales tax. We share your disappointment about this failure to craft a budget solution that would have established e-fairness by leveling the playing field for locally owned retailers. This unhappy result rests solely on the doorstep of Governor Schwarzenegger.

On June 30, the governor vetoed a legislative budget that included an e-fairness provision, and subsequent to that -- following the threats of giant out-of-state retailers to de-list their affiliates -- he made clear that he would not be part of a solution that supported local communities and law-abiding Main Street retailers.

Make no mistake, this is a disappointing result. However, it in no way diminishes the importance of our hard-won victory in the legislature, which voted in favor of e-fairness and sent a sensible budget solution to the governor only to see him veto it. Your e-mails, phone calls, and letters helped elected officials understand the critical importance of leveling the playing field for in-state retailers

that contribute so much to the economic health of their communities.

The relationships that you have established and the message you helped deliver are in no way diminished because of this outcome. In recent weeks, Rhode Island's governor has signed a state budget that includes an e-fairness provision, and we may see other victories in the coming weeks. But no matter what happens, ABA, NCIBA, and SCIBA will be carrying on this fight with unflagging efforts. With your continued support, we are confident that we will win in California for one simple reason: Our cause is the right one.

Again, thank you for all your efforts, and if you have any questions or comments, please do contact us.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bigelow, Executive Director, SCIBA

Hut Landon, Executive Director, NCIBA

Oren Teicher, Chief Executive Officer, ABA

P.S. If you would like to express your views on E-Fairness directly to Governor Schwarzenegger, you can find [a templated letter](#) (under Advocacy tab) on BookWeb.org. We encourage you to share a copy with your elected officials and with [ABA Public Policy Liaison David Grogan](#).

A Personal Note From Hut

One of the most irksome aspects of this budget process was our governor's willingness to embrace the arguments of Overstock.com, a Utah-based company run by Mormons, which threatened to lay off its affiliates if sales tax reform was part of the budget. Schwarzenegger praised the company, decried the potential loss of affiliate jobs (how about OUR jobs?), called online collection a tax hike, and said he'd veto any budget that included it. Unbelievable, but his threat caused the provision to be yanked by the legislature.

We of course will not give up this fight, and we are examining new ways to pressure the BOE as well. Meanwhile, San Franciscans should know that a bill to force sales tax collection introduced this Spring by Assemblywoman Nancy Skinner never made it out of committee, due in part to the failure of Fiona Ma to commit to vote for its passage. Her office also ignored two requests for meetings to discuss the bill. We will make sure that local city businesses are aware of Assemblywoman Ma's non-support. It's my opinion that anyone not with us on this issue should be declared anti-small business, plain and simple.

I'd also like to salute the work and effort expended by longtime independent bookseller friend Lenny Goldberg, head of the California Tax Reform Association and our expert in Sacramento, and Bill Petrocelli from Book Passage, who has fought tirelessly on behalf of internet sales tax collection for ten years.

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One City One Book Chooses 'Necropolis'

The One City One Book: San Francisco Reads program recently announced this year's selection -- **Alive in Necropolis** by Doug Dorst. The thriller, set in San Francisco and the cemeteries of Colma,



is a debut novel about a young police officer who is struggling to keep the peace and maintain a grip on reality in a town where the dead outnumber the living.

This year, One City One Book: San Francisco Reads adds a new feature to the program, as selected bookstores are offering a special opportunity to donate a copy of *Alive in Necropolis* to a public high school. Through the program “**Treat Yourself/Stock Their Shelves,**” participants can help support literacy and reading by buying an extra copy of the book as a tax deductible gift to a local public high school library.

New NCIBA Bookstore Members

Sue Conklin

Books Rio V

207 A Main Street, Rio Vista 94571
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Diane Savage

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