



NEWSLETTER

October 2008

Education Attracts Highest Turnout in Years Trade Show Highlights

The NCIBA Trade Show, or Family Reunion as it's known in the office, delivered its annual mix of education, authors, and publisher-bookseller interaction. Show attendance was about the same as last year, although Sunday's show floor was noticeably quieter than 2007, while the number of exhibitor tables shrunk by 10%. Over 525 orders were placed at the show, a number comparable to the last two years, and 120+ independent bookstores were represented at the show.

The one area of noticeably higher attendance was Friday's education program. Virtually all of the eight sessions offered attracted full rooms -- 40-50 each -- with over 100 booksellers in attendance throughout the day. For the first time, we videotaped three of the sessions -- Building a Great Graphic Novel Section for Kids and Teens, Booksellers Talking Co-op, and the Print on Demand for Booksellers seminar presented by ABA -- and have them posted on our website. We also have write-ups in this issue of the Print on Demand and Co-op sessions, and *Click* author Bill Tancer's talk on internet data gathering. Plus, you can read about our most talked-about event, our Friday lunch with *The Oxford Project* photographer Peter Feldstein and Van Jones, author of *The Green Collar Economy*.

Aside from education, authors were a huge draw at the show. The Sunday Children's Breakfast was a flat-out sellout, thanks to Neil Gaiman (a rock star of an author if ever there was one), Simms Taback and David Carter, and at the Saturday breakfast, Katherine Neville, Kathleen Norris and Rep. Barbara Lee were a hugely popular trio,



with the outspoken and charismatic Lee earning a standing ovation from a politically-savvy audience.

On Friday evening, following the annual NCIBA Membership Meeting, writer G.X. (Greg) Robillard provided 15 minutes of hilarity in talking about his forthcoming book, *Captain Freedom* (Greg's speech is also online under the trade show link at nciba.com). Preceding the meeting and following Robillard, attendees were treated to live cajun/creole music courtesy of the band Sauce Piquante, led by Blair Kilpatrick, whose memoir *Accordian Dreams* will be published in January.

At the Saturday evening Author Reception, 22 authors were on hand to sign books and mingle with booksellers. Two scheduled participants, Tiffany Baker and Chris Golden, had to cancel at the last minute, but Simon & Schuster kindly provided an on-the-spot replacement in the person of Elle Newmark, author of the upcoming *The Book of Unholy Mischief*. Abraham Verghese and Annie Barrows were among the favorites with

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Trade Show Report

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booksellers, but the one author everyone wanted to meet was Van Jones, whose dynamic and inspiring talk the day before kept patient attendees waiting in line to meet him throughout the evening.

The NCIBA presented two brand-new Rep Picks sessions this year, and both garnered high marks and solid attendance. On Friday, 10 local independent reps engaged in a 'speed dating' approach, moving in pairs from table to table of booksellers to give five minute pitches for small and university press favorites.

Then on Saturday afternoon, 12 representatives of the larger publishing houses presented picks in six categories - Favorite First Fiction Title; Title Well Suited for Book Groups; Commercial Title That's Also Well-Written; Quirkiest Book on the List; A Great Book Coming in 2009; and One Book I Wish Everyone Would Read. These categories produced a stellar group of titles, and the format proved lively and reasonably fast-paced for the nearly 100 in the audience. A complete list of all recommended books is now posted on our web site, nciba.com.

On the trade show floor, we debuted the Northern California Independent Publisher Row, an area dedicated to local publishers and designed to draw bookseller attention to the diverse selection of books they offer. Visitors to the Independent Publishers Row could also pick up a handout of each publisher's three bestselling titles; that list is now posted on our web site as well. Feedback from the publishers and several booksellers we spoke to was uniformly positive, so this may become a trade show tradition.

Although Sunday's attendance was significantly lower than on Saturday (and even compared to last year), both the Cookbook Celebration and the Diva event for children's books were well-attended. The Celebration featured two recipes each from *Spain, A Culinary Journey* and *Olives and Oranges*, and one from *Organic Marin*. The Diva event, an annual gathering sponsored by children's sales reps, offered presentations by Roz Hildon (Scholastic), Dandy Conway (Random House), Deb Murphy (HarperCollins), Susan McConnell (PGW), and

Colleen Conway (Penguin).

Throughout the three days of activity, the overall feeling of booksellers, sales reps, and publishers could be best described as cautious optimism. In a time of economic downturn and retail uncertainty, the trade show still proved to be a place to conduct business and to re-connect and re-affirm with friends and colleagues.

As we look ahead to 2009, we appreciate the 50+ booksellers who have already responded to our email query about a potential change in days and dates, and we urge those of you who haven't weighed in to do so. More to come soon.

Random House Honors Reiheld with Scholarship

To honor the memory of beloved bookseller and longtime sales rep Susan Reiheld, Random House is offering an annual scholarship to the ABA's Winter Institute. The first award is for WI4, being held in Salt Lake City, UT, Jan. 29-Feb. 1, 2009. The NCIBA was asked to solicit scholarship nominations and select the winning recipient

Which we did. The winner of the first annual Susan Reiheld Winter Institute scholarship is Lori Peters, owner of Wild About Books in Clearlake. Lori impressed the selection committee with her bookselling enthusiasm and initiative. She recently started the Lake County Booksellers Alliance, joining the 5 bookstores in that county to encourage literacy and work on fundraising and educational programs together. According to Lori, the group has worked hard "to educate their community about the value of independent businesses and has been on the local radio station discussing Amazon.com, the Big Tax Evader."

Susan would be proud.

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Trade Show Education Seminars Packed With Information

By Zachary Chouteau

Friday, Oct. 3 was Education Day at this year's show, and the Random House-sponsored workshops provided a wealth of tangible suggestions and information for booksellers to put into play at their stores. Here's an overview of some highlights.

Author "Clicks" with Booksellers

Bill Tancer, a self-confessed 'data geek,' spoke to a packed room about a seemingly dry topic -- research illustrating the hot trends of what millions of web-surfers are actually seeking online at any given time. Scratch beneath the surface a bit, however, and the data is actually not only fascinating but potentially very helpful as well. There is a reason after all why Tancer's *Click: What Millions of People are Doing Online and Why it Matters* (Hyperion) has made bestseller lists.

Tancer tackled the significance of particular search terms - such as 'prom dress' and 'diet' - peaking at certain times of year, how news items can have a drastic effect on the frequency of search terms, and how he has been able to accurately predict the winners of reality shows (such as *Dancing with the Stars*) by researching hot search terms.

While attendees were generally captivated during the session, what truly brought the audience to the edge of their collective seats was Tancer discussing how retailers can use search data to inform their decisions on what to sell, when to display and other key strategies. By being a "data detective," as he calls it, booksellers can discover some surprising information about when certain topics are hot and cold, and react accordingly.

For example, baseball searches, which one might expect to peak in April at the start of the



year, or during the World Series, are actually at their zenith during July's All Star Game. Diet searches meanwhile, hit a high point by January 5 and decline from there, hitting a low point during the Thanksgiving holidays. And the term 'engagement ring' suddenly skyrockets just before that holiday, something diamond retailers have only recently become aware of.

Some of the "free help for booksellers" recommended by the personable author includes Yahoo! Buzz, the Lycos 50 and Google Trends, sites that provide for this valuable 'data mining.' Tancer also advised that booksellers use amazon.com as a research tool for book popularity rather than just seeing the site as a competitor, and highly advised setting up a Fan Page at facebook.com, which allows you to check the demographic of your visitors. "Powell's, Kepler's and Books Inc. all have fan pages," he added.

Those wanting to find out more about Tancer or using these competitive insights to inform their decisions can visit www.hitwise.com.

Meeting New Demand

The ABA's Senior Director of Editorial Content, Dan Cullen, presented an early afternoon seminar on Print-to-order (PTO), an intriguing way for booksellers to get into publishing without the potential financial peril. Joined by Monica McClanahan of Willow Bridge Books in Oakhurst, Cullen discussed the details of ABA's partnership with Applewood Books, a print-on-demand system that can "further tie a store into its community."

In essence, the process allows booksellers to publish out-of-print titles—by either acquiring the rights or choosing books in the public domain (which applies to any out-of-print titles preceding 1923)—or new, never-before-printed material (assuming they have the rights). The printing process typically takes 3-6 weeks, with discounts based on the number of copies published, and booksellers

can choose from cover templates, create their own, or pay to have a new one designed.

One creative way ABA bookseller members might employ the service is to copy McClanahan's insightful concept of profiting from the strong interest in regional history at her store, which is located at the southern gateway to Yosemite National Park. Some of the popular books she has reprinted through Applewood "have to do with Yosemite -- wildlife, the gold rush, local Indian tribes," popular themes with visitors to the park.

McClanahan lauded the program for helping her get into publishing, and she's enjoyed "helping people get their books out there," since Applewood can print new unpublished works as well. She's also sold some of the regionally focused books to nearby museums for them to sell to customers.

Oren Teicher, ABA's COO, added from the audience that the process can also be used to create local guides to a town or area. A store in Great Barrington, MA, for example, has published and sold hundreds of such local directories to its customers using the PTO system.

Those wanting to discover more about the PTO program were encouraged to contact the ABA's Len Vlahos at len@bookweb.org.

Co-op Shop Talk

A late afternoon seminar, Booksellers Talking Co-op, was packed with applicable insights and info on this crucial subject. Led by three bookseller panelists—Kathleen Caldwell of A Great Good Place for Books, Margie Scott Tucker of Books Inc. and Heather Lyon of Lyon Books—the workshop covered everything from events to in-store displays to newsletter book reviews.

Caldwell opined that while it used to be easier to obtain co-op funding, "there is still money out there—you just need to know where to find it," and said she's willing to help any indie booksellers seeking advice on the matter. In terms of her favorite publishers for co-op, she said her favorite was Penguin, but also lauded her Random House rep and added that Harper is also generous. The Oakland bookseller also mentioned she often takes digital pictures of her store displays to send to reps, and urged audience members to be pro-active in communicating with publishers.

Workshops Also Online

If you'd like to see and hear the full co-op and print-on-demand workshops, as well as the graphic novel session by the Association of Booksellers for Children's Kristen McLean's, go to nciba.com to watch the video presentations.

"Don't be afraid to ask [for co-op] or to ask questions," she remarked. "Your reps are your advocates, and there are no stupid questions when it comes to co-op."

San Francisco's Tucker said she always uses her 'big book' (the *ABA Book Buyer's Handbook*) when using co-op, and recommended pursuing co-op funds for such things as window and end cap displays; she mentioned, for example, that Denver's Tattered Cover charges co-op for all of their staff picks. Seeing your bookstore space as "real estate" is a good perspective to take, added Tucker, and you can negotiate co-op over book club displays, promotional placements and other store areas—not to mention newsletters, websites and in-store events. She also suggested booksellers look into the information from Paz & Associates under 'online education' at the ABA's bookweb.org.

Finally, Heather Lyon spoke about becoming a "co-op disciple," investigating every venue of the subject. She's already exceeded \$10,000 in co-op for the year, and cited Simon & Schuster as a good publisher to work with. "They really give away the store," she enthused. Lyon additionally praised her store's newsletter, which she says had made sales improve drastically and also garners her \$200 in co-op funds each issue, which normally includes four book reviews and a poem. It's helped, she said, to give store coupons to reviewers for incentive, and she often has children write newsletter reviews.

Lyon also had a wealth of information about the NCIBA Holiday Catalog. Among her tips: Choose a method of distribution (i.e., newspaper insertion) and negotiate the best deal; order *all* of the books in the catalog, although be cautious with return penalties and non-returnable items; ready your entire staff, so they'll know which books are in the catalog and to recommend them; and create a display showcasing the catalog books together.

For plenty of additional ideas, booksellers can email Lyon at heather@lyonbooks.com.

News and Notes

Sunday Chronicle Book Review Information

The NCIBA has “borrowed” a very cool idea from the Southern California Independent Booksellers Association (SCIBA) and contacted the new *San Francisco Chronicle* Boo Review editor about getting advance word of titles being reviewed in the Sunday Book Review. SCIBA gets such a list from the *LA Times* and sends it along to its members, and now we are doing the same with the *Chronicle*.

Additionally, we are posting the titles on our web site, usually by Wednesday afternoon for the upcoming Sunday Book Review.

ABC Offers Fall Membership Special

Hey booksellers, here's a great offer - join the Association of Booksellers for Children (ABC) between 10/1 and 12/1, and pay no dues until 2010.

Store membership in the ABC is a great way to connect your children's booksellers to a national network, and an affordable way to gain access to a wide variety of tools and expertise for growing your children's business, including book lists, full color catalogs, a list serv, and many other resources. Annual store membership is just \$85.00. Join online at www.abfc.com.

Bookselling in Tough Times

The ABA has posted a several hugely useful articles dealing with the economic challenges facing booksellers on its web site, www.bookweb.org (and you don't have to be a member to read them). We urge all bookstores to find time to read through the information as we approach what could be a crucial holiday season for many retailers.

An Offer From Carl Lennertz at HarperCollins

(written in his own hand)

ATTENTION BOOKSELLERS!!

Want to get published?

We are soliciting entries from booksellers only for regional versions of Ecco's STATE BY STATE!!!!

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

About 2,500 words and by Word doc by email only.

Deadline: February 1, 2009 ...

.....but take a look at some of the pieces in the book now to see the flavor of what we're looking for, ok? Warm up your Corona or # 2's before the holiday season hits.

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. Incl. drawings!

Email me if you have any questions:
carl@harpercollins.com

A Moving Feast at the Trade Show

Friday's special lunch program on the Oakland Marriott's top floor was a sell-out, and both presenters made quite an impression on those in attendance.



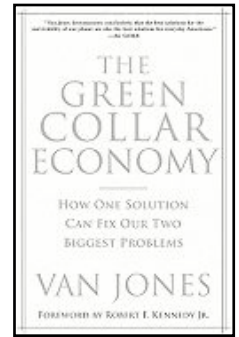
Photographer Peter Feldstein kicked things off with a slide show on his superb new book, *The Oxford Project* (Welcome Books), a look at the residents of his small Iowa town over two decades. Those fea-

tured in the book had their photos taken on the town's main street twice, twenty years

apart, and use their own words to describe everything from religious beliefs to failed marriage to drug addiction. The result is a one-of-a-kind creation, and both the pictures and words are poignant and illuminating.

One of the hits of the show followed, Oakland activist Van Jones discussing *The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix America's Two Biggest Problems* (HarperOne). The charismatic author spoke with passion about how a dedication to the environment and sustainability can also cure the country's economic and financial woes, and attendees were moved by Jones' thoughtful comments and obvious commitment to the task.

-- Zachary Chouteau



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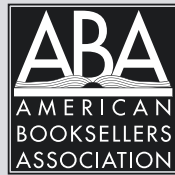
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