

BIBLIOPHILE

News for and about publishing for our publishers.

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You may have noticed I missed a month—February was extraordinarily busy here in the Biblio offices (whenever we weren't closed for snow!) and I spent a lot of March catching up. I will continue to endeavor to put the newsletter out monthly, but book sales are always my first priority!

The economy has continued to slump and book sales are still reflecting that situation. It's getting more and more difficult to get the chain buyers to take a chance on new authors and new publishers. Thanks to all of you who have recognized this situation and reacted by increasing your promotion efforts. Hopefully you'll see an increase in sales as a result. If you find something that works for your titles, please let me know and I'm happy to share it in this newsletter. The small press community can really benefit from sharing ideas and information.

Because of the bookstore sales slump, I want to remind everyone how important it is to work on special sales—sales of your books outside of the bookstore market—sales that are generally non-returnable. We advise all of our publishers, both NBN and Biblio, that any publishing company will be far more profitable and stable if it's making at least 50% of its sales outside of the (returnable) bookstore market.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD—HOW SALES REPS WORK

Every sales rep works differently—they have to be flexible in order to present your books in the way that a particular account or buyer wants to hear about them. Some buyers want to get a catalog and samples with the rep following up by phone. Some buyers never want to hear from a rep—as long as they get a catalog then they're happy. And some buyers want to—and need to—see the rep in person.

I'd like to share a little bit about these in-person sales calls. I think it helps the publisher gain perspective to know about the process and the environment. The in-person sales call might happen at a major chain like Books-A-Million or Borders or it could happen at one of the Independents like Book Soup or Tattered Cover. The experience is different at every one—with a few things in common: the rep needs to make an appointment with their buyer (or several buyers if it's a chain buying by category—like B&N and Borders) and he or she has to be prepared to present to that buyer.

One of the toughest parts of being a good book sales rep is feeling out a new buyer—What kinds of books do they like? What are their pet peeves? What impresses them? How much research do they need on a title? What materials do they need to see? What kind of donuts do they prefer? (OK—this last one is only true at some accounts...)

A rep's goal is to relate information on all of the titles "in their bag" that day and make sure that the account buys the appropriate—not the maximum—number of books. The only people making money off returns are the shipping companies, so we all want to keep returns down.

The rep has to be able to get the buy he or she wants in 30 seconds or less of "pitch" time. So, if they have to spend 15 seconds explaining away a problem (price too high, uninteresting cover, author without credentials, poor production quality, lack of promotion) then they've wasted precious time. It is extremely important that the publisher provide the best sales materials and finished product that they can. The rep only gets one, very brief, chance for each title.

The buyer may have questions—usually tough questions about the author's track record or the publisher's lack of a publicity plan—but, in most cases, the buyer wants to move on to the next title. They will most likely have already made their decision to buy or not to buy. But they'll place the order in their system much later—especially at the chain stores. Some chains can take up to 8 weeks to actually put the order in the system.

An effective sales manager of a book sales force will do everything in their power to free up their reps' time so that they can focus on their buyers and their accounts. We want to keep the reps on the road and in the customers' offices and stores. That's why all of your publicity and other information is funneled through the main office where we can organize it and get it into the right hands in a timely fashion. Thanks to all you who have been cooperating in those efforts.

More on sales in the next issue...

ONLINE REPORTS: BACKORDER REPORT

The backorder report is a summary of outstanding orders for which the warehouse does not have stock. It is run monthly. The monthly version of these reports will stay on line for at least 13 months.

This report is an excellent tool for your use in reviewing what orders will be canceled if stock is not received in the warehouse. Please be advised that these cancellation dates are set by the accounts, not by Biblio. Each customer sets criteria for how long they will allow orders to stay in our system without shipping and can vary based on the type of order (i.e. a new title vs. a backlist title). These vary by account, so backorders may cancel on a newer order. Since we fill orders by date received, you should send stock to cover all backorders and additional stock to fill new orders.

-**ISBN** is the isbn without the dashes

-**FMT** is the book format. BTP is paperback, BTC is cloth, AAA is audio cassette and ACD is CD.

Other examples are shown in the on line help section of the on line reports.

-**It St** is the current status of the item. Some common statuses are AV (active & saleable), NF (not yet published/saleable) and OP (out of print, not saleable or returnable). Again other examples are in the on line help section at the beginning of the reports.

-**Bill-to** customer gives the name of the customer who will be invoiced for this order.

-**City** is the location of the customer.

-**St** is the state of the bill-to customer

-**Order Number** is the Biblio order number for this particular purchase order sent in by the customer.

-**Ord Sta** is the status of the order. It will show as B for backorder

-**Unit Price** is the list price of the book

-**Discount %** is the percent of discount which is applied to the list price. This is based on the customer type and the type of discount we have assigned for that title (i.e., trade, promotional).

-**Net \$ Value** is the value of the order. It is a calculated number equalling the quantity of books ordered x the discounted price.

-**Cancel Bko Date** is the most important column on this report. This date is the date the order will automatically cancel from the system if we have not received stock for this title to cover all backorders.

If you have any questions about your online reports, please contact **Karen Mattscheck**, Inventory Manager, at kmattscheck@nbnbooks.com or 717-794-3800 x3513.

BOWKER BOOKS-IN-PRINT

You may have received an e-mail from R.R. Bowker (a.k.a. Books-In-Print) about B&N now being supplied with database information directly from Bowker. That means that the B&N database will automatically receive data from Biblio AND from Bowker and they can overwrite each other. So, it is extremely important that you keep both Bowker and Biblio up-to-date with new book information as well as changes to existing books. Biblio is responsible for all of the bookstore databases but the publisher is responsible for the Bowker database—which now affects the B&N database.

ADVERTISING & BIBLIO

Kudos to all of you who took part in PMA's *Publishers Weekly* cover advertisement! Your books all looked great and you should see some sales as a result. Such trade ads can also be worthwhile for media attention, rights sales and new title acquisitions—so it's a great deal. Just FYI, it would be best to say "Available from Biblio (a div. Of NBN)" rather than just NBN in these kind of industry ads. NBN and Biblio have separate sales reps and the NBN reps won't be aware of your book if asked about it. This could affect your credibility and cause unnecessary work for the wrong rep so it's best to be clear.

THE GREEN PRESS INITIATIVE—SAVE THE TREES!

The Green Press Initiative, is a nonprofit program, working with publishers, authors, printers and suppliers to catalyze environmentally responsible book publishing in the U.S. Publisher members make a commitment to phase out of using papers with ancient forest fiber and to increasing levels of postconsumer recycled content for black and white, uncoated text titles. Publishers participating in the Green Press Initiative agree to implement their internal policy shifts within a 3-5 year time period.

The Green Press Initiative recently performed a market pricing analysis and found that switching from (1) virgin fiber to 30% postconsumer recycled paper equates to a cost increase of approximately \$0.00 to \$0.04 cents per book and (2) virgin fiber to 100% postconsumer recycled paper equates to a cost increase of approximately \$0.00 to \$0.17 cents per book. Green Press also conducted a random survey of hundreds of readers in front of Borders Books in San Diego and San Francisco to see if readers would be willing to support the effort. The survey revealed that 86% of readers are willing to pay more for books printed on recycled paper. Of those that are willing to pay more, the median amount is \$1.00 more for books printed on recycled and ancient forest friendly paper.

According to case studies of publishers and printers on The Green Press website, recycled papers perform as well as virgin papers. You can check them out at www.greenpressinitiative.com/publishers/case_studies. Call Erin Johnson at 301/438-3927 for further info about becoming a member (it's free) or you can email her at erin@greenpressinitiative.org.

BOOK MARKETING MAP—SPECIAL SALES HELP!

Do you want to increase your sales into non-bookstore markets? A genre-specific Book Market Map™ directory supplies you with names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses and/or links to potential buyers in non-bookstore markets. You can do-it-yourself or they can contact them for you. For more information, contact Brian Jud by phone(800) 562-4357 or e-mail brianjud@attbi.com. See www.bookmarketingworks.com

BOOK EXPO AMERICA

LAST CALL! BEA is in L.A. from May 31 to June 1, 2003. Biblio has an exhibit adjacent to NBN. Information has gone out to you about arranging to have your book displayed in the Biblio booth. The cost is the same as last year (\$100/title). We have also included the opportunity to request an author badge so that you or your author might attend the show. If you're interested, please e-mail Theresa at thomas@bibliodistribution.com for a reservation form by April 7.

INFORMATION THAT BEARS REPEATING

To Correct Online Retailer/Database Errors:

<http://www.bibliodistribution.com/publishers/passwordprotect/datacorrections.shtml>
(Username: bibliopublisher ; Password: bigsales)

Publicity Updates: If you have an update about your publicity and you want the sales reps and our buyers to know about it, please put it into our preferred publicity update format. The format can be found on our website at: <http://www.bibliodistribution.com/publishers/marketing.shtml>

A Plea From the Biblio Staff: Please identify yourself in your e-mails to us. We have quite a few publishers now and we need you to include your name, publishing company, title and ISBN when you contact us. Not including that information will delay response to your request.

Address Change: We are now located at **4501 Forbes Blvd.**, Lanham, MD 20706. Our fax numbers are 301-429-5745 and 301-429-5746. Our phone numbers are the same.

Here are a couple of ideas for getting all-important industry information and for networking opportunities:

Subscribe to *Publishers Weekly*: www.publishersweekly.com

JOIN PMA: <https://pma-online.org/membappl.cfm>

SUBSCRIBE TO THE *SPAN NEWSLETTER*: email Lurina@SPANnet.org and type in "SUBSCRIBE."

Attention Publishers: If there is anything you would like to read about in an upcoming issue of *Bibliophile*, please e-mail your idea to me at info@bibliodistribution.com. I will do my best to include it.
Thank you! -Jen

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