

## Marci Crossan

---

**From:** Edith Reynolds [editor@bookologist.com]  
**Sent:** February 29, 2004 8:49 AM  
**To:** mcrossan@abebooks.com  
**Subject:** The Bookologist #21 - February 29, 2004

The Bookologist Number 21 - February 29, 2004  
ISSN 1544-1997

=====  
Editorial  
=====

This past weekend The Greenwich Village Antiquarian Bookfair was held in NYC and among those set up to sell were Lee and Mike Temares of Long Island. Many people familiar with East Coast book fairs recognize the Temares' booth immediately, a cornucopia of children's series books.

Greenwich Village is a three-day show and Sunday afternoon had its lulls. During one my husband Danny kidded Lee by asking if she'd mind if he installed a flashing blue light to attract customers. She laughed and shared her favorite technique for enticing customers into her shop.

Lee has red dot sales, days when some of the books have a red dot added to their price sticker, indicating a percentage off the price. "It's become very popular," she told us and added that the idea had been reported in a couple of publications.

Customers who are on the fence about a book look forward to red-dot days, hoping that particular book will go down in price. Sometimes they'll wait, most times they begin to worry that the copy will disappear and buy it rather than lose it.

On special days Lee will post a sign in the window asking people to guess what book on display holds the red dot. It invites interaction, whets the appetite, and generally creates a fun atmosphere. Anyone knowing Lee or Mike will understand that fun is a large part of why they sell books-they like people.

Whether you have a brick and mortar store, specialize in book fairs, or work solely online or through catalogs, selling can hit a funk. A steady flow of sales can trickle down to a pace like molasses. And sometimes offering discounts isn't quite enough; sometimes you need to shine a spotlight on yourself.

Many years ago, in our first shop, I would hang balloons on the front door. Phil Reynolds swore the flag hanging outside his Old Porte Bookshop in Newburyport, MA was the best advertisement he had.

Enticing customers over the Internet is a bit harder. If you send out emails you're competing with the avalanche of ads promising male enhancement, mortgages, and golden opportunities to get rich quick in Nigeria.

Adding bookmarks, post card size information cards, etc. with sold books is the obvious way of encouraging repeat business, but these are people who already found you. Alibris has been adding coupons to their receipts in order to encourage repeat business in this way. The real challenge is getting newcomers.

We wondered what some of our readers have done to attract customer attention and I invite you to send in your suggestions. Perhaps we can all learn from them.

Edith Reynolds  
Email: edith@bookologist.com

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sponsor Message  
American Booksellers Fulfillment Service

American Booksellers is a family owned and operated outsource fulfillment center for the antiquarian/used book trade. We provide online booksellers a pick, pack, ship service along with book storage-both shelved and boxed. Our employees have ten+ years experience working within the antiquarian book trade. <http://www.americanbooksellers.com/?bk>

---

## Table of Contents

---

1. Fillz Streamlines Online Merchant Book Inventory
2. The Bookologist Interviews Hannes Blum, ABE.com: Introduction
3. Author Watch: George Orwell (1903 -1950)
4. The Good Bookman: Lee Temares
5. Letters to the Editor
6. Call for Articles

---

### 1.) Fillz Streamlines Online Merchant Book Inventory

---

by Edith Reynolds

One of the more tedious tasks we face as booksellers is inventory management, making sure everything is properly described, correctly uploaded, and promptly deleted once a sale is made. Recently, one of our readers, Gary Nargi of Bowerybay.com, introduced me to a new system on the market called Fillz <<http://www.fillz.com>>. According to their Web site, the program is a comprehensive method for multi-tasking.

Fillz.com is an online inventory and order-management service for book, CD and DVD sellers. FillZ automatically lists, de-lists and retrieves orders from venue sites such as Amazon, Alibris, Abebooks, and more. The site says, "You can now "load once, list to many." FillZ will streamline your sales process from inventory through fulfillment."

Jie Zhang, one of the co-founders of the program, said the idea came last year when her partner Ron Cuperman watched a friend sell books over Amazon.com. The tedious nature of the process prompted him to "try and find a way to automate the daily tasks," she said. Both partners had more than 10 years experience developing software for corporate giants like Starbucks and Schwab. They felt they could make a contribution to the online book trade that would allow sellers more time to focus on the selling of books once inventory management became easier.

So far more than 100 customers are using the program, and Fillz regularly mines their knowledge for ways to improve and streamline Fillz. "We talk to users constantly," Jie Zhang said. A note on the Fillz site addresses the merger of Half.com into eBay. "Half.com recently informed us that they are not giving out any new ftp accounts for merchants. We think it is possible that eBay will drop the Half.com backend infrastructure after replacing it with expanded functionality on eBay. eBay just started to offer the ability to list an item by ISBN/UPC. This, plus eBay Stores are the first steps subsuming the functionality currently offered by Half.com. We are continuing to support Half.com users who have a ftp account. We are looking into supporting eBay next but we want input from our users as to which site they would like us to work with most."

What Fillz has to offer is outlined clearly on the Web site. When an item is sold on one site, its quantity is automatically adjusted on FillZ and on each listing site. Orders from all sites can be processed together via the FillZ interface. Orders can be moved to New, Processed, Completed, Cancelled and Deferred status. A user can download orders of any time interval from all sites in one tab delimited report as well as various file formats that are supported by all major online postage services. A barcode can be printed on each order for easy tracking.

FillZ provides complete-order fulfillment and processing tools. Users can easily generate pull lists and packing slips, sorted by location, order number or SKU number. A confirmation email can be automatically sent upon order shipment. Integrated postage printing through leading online postage services is provided. Orders can be downloaded into QuickBooks or Amazon format anytime. Sales report with graphs is provided online. It

allows for bar-code scanning and bulk-loading.

"The biggest challenge right now is spreading the word about the program," said Jie Zhang. Since this company is self-funded, dollars are tight and they do all tasks themselves. "It's hard to get known, especially when there's no money for advertising. Right now all our customers came from word of mouth."

Despite the tight schedules and heavy workload, Fillz is promising continual improvements and to achieve their goal for 2000 customers. Four people are on staff in the San Francisco office providing customer support, database improvement, and marketing. "We make every effort to make our program fit everybody's needs."

Fillz is a UIEE based program that, Jie Zhang says, is compatible with most book-related services and sites. The program currently provides access to eight selling venues, the Endicia postage system and Stamps.com. Most questions are easily answered on the Fillz Web site, and the company offers a 30-day free trial for newcomers.

Customer costs are calculated by what is sold. Not counting shipping reimbursements, sales are charged 1.5% for up to \$4000 earned in a month. After \$4000, the percent drops incrementally.

Peruse the site and try the service for a month. If you have any questions, contact customer service at Fillz.com.

=====

2.) The Bookologist Interviews Hannes Blum, ABE.com: Introduction

=====

by Edith Reynolds

Hannes Blum worked the summer of 1994 in Toronto and took a short trip to Vancouver where he thought to himself, "This is a nice city to live." Now that he's there, installed as Advanced Book Exchange's (ABE.com) president, he agrees with his initial assessment. But that doesn't mean he neglects his native Germany.

Blum co-founded JustBooks, an online selling service acquired by Abe.com to make headway into the European market. This acquisition has allowed Abe to have a stable office base on the Continent that Blum oversees. In fact, our interview, and the posting of our newsletter, was delayed because of his extensive travel.

Blum said, "Europe is two years behind us." This newest phase allows the company to enjoy a true international platform. "The international part of the business is exciting," he said. This growth has not only added more sellers to the Abe stable but has also increased the number of workers. At present, 90 people are working for Abe across the globe and, according to one Canadian publication, it is one of the top 100 companies to work for.

Abe's been around from the beginning of the online bookselling boom, and its tenacity has earned it a lion's share of the market. But that doesn't mean those at Abe can rest on their laurels. When early venues like BiblioFind were bought out by companies like Amazon.com and obliterated, this offered Abe (a privately held company) the opportunity to build a solid customer base of serious booksellers.

According to Blum, the number of sellers currently affiliated with Abe is 12,000 individuals with more than 55 million books listed for sale. But competition is fierce these days. Heavy hitters like Amazon and Alibris came into the market with huge financing. And that meant Abe had to focus on what it did best: customer service. "Brian and Keith listened to booksellers," Blum said. "And they were paid back in recommendations."

Blum adds, "Abe always focuses on the partnership with the bookseller. The company acknowledges the value in that relationship." The catchword for this relationship is service. "Abe is a great product. We offer the bookseller and great tool," Blum is happy to report.

That product is two-fold on the surface. There is Abe the selling venue where a

bookseller can list inventory for sale to a worldwide market and process the sales through an easy-to-use seller page. The secondary portion of the business is the free listing software (Homebase) Abe provides.

Behind the scenes, every segment of the business has a team of experts working on improving the site and the services. A new version of the listing program is in the works that will have "nice new functions," though committing to a firm date is difficult when you're dealing with a software product, according to Blum. "Internally," he reports, "Homebase is a priority."

Current changes on the sales side can be seen during the processing of sales. Refund management and a pricing feature are two of the latest developments. When asked about the bugs and glitches that go along with changes, Blum responded, "There hasn't been too much feedback about the returns so far. And the adjustments are our way of trying to improve the product."

New site architecture and improvements of the search time are underway, and the entire staff is dedicated to understanding data better in order to try and make it easy for buyers to use Abe.

Blum refers back to feedback from users, but the present day Abe is a far cry from what was the infant Abe. Seller feedback can be a cacophonous cry from 12,000 different voices that are passionate about their business. Sellers sometimes want to go in a lot of different directions, and special interest groups can emerge.

What the staff tries to do, he explained, is to channel this feedback and create a dialogue through the company newsletters and even in live online chats with Blum.

And if the public thinks that the shift from direct management by owner to management by a hired president means Abe has hit a plateau, they're wrong. Blum feels the competition nipping at his heels everyday. American venues with deep pockets have bulldozed into the market at a time when the Canadian dollar is weakened. "That means we have to be really smart," Blum contends. With the likes of eBay and Amazon waiting to scoop up a piece of the pie, Abe is faced with the typical Canadian export company type problems and has had to think and rethink how to best invest in the market.

Aside from cracking the European trade, it's necessary to attract book buyers. Another of the steps for a company to be "really smart" is to attract good talent. "The salaries may be lower," Blum explained, but the quality of life living in Vancouver makes up for the difference and that has attracted talented professionals.

Abe's strength has also been to develop partnerships with companies that can draw in customers and revenue. The BNBQ partnership with Barnes and Noble, Amazon.com, and the various Australian, Japanese, European programs has spread the word.

For our readers, Abe is worth considering as a sales venue for books in that it allows booksellers to retain a lot more control over their sales. It has been a company that has endured and prospered and we will continue to see it grow. Take advantage of the site, get to know the other sellers and if you have a store, ask for promotional materials. It is a company where the seller still matters.

=====  
3.) Author Watch: George Orwell (1903 -1950)  
=====

by Mark O'Neill

In my opinion, George Orwell is often under-appreciated by readers. People tend to remember him for his two most famous works - "Animal Farm" (with the famous quote "all animals are equal but some are more equal than others") and of course the famous "1984," which introduced us to "Big Brother" and painted a bleak picture of the future in which the world exists as a totalitarian police state.

But I feel many people overlook Orwell's other books, which are just as good, including his account of the Spanish Civil War in "Homage to Catalonia," and my personal favourite, "Down and Out in Paris and London" in which he writes an amusing story about being a

dishwasher in Paris and London. Being a former dishwasher myself, I could identify with some of the story!

Orwell was initially a Communist sympathizer until he went to Spain to fight in the civil war. The horrors he witnessed shifted his opinion. He showed his distaste towards Moscow by writing Animal Farm in which the animals represented the Soviet authorities. When the Cold War started, Animal Farm was an instant hit.

The tragedy about Orwell was that he never lived long enough to see the full success of his work. He died of tuberculosis in 1950 and before he died, he finished "1984" from his hospital bed.

**\*\*Average Selling Prices\*\***

English-language editions (including even mass-market versions) are extremely popular on German eBay. Mass-market versions can go for up to 10 Euros (around \$11) as Orwell appears on the reading lists for most German students studying English. On eBay.com, a first edition hardcover copy of Animal Farm, printed in 1945, is selling for almost \$2000! <<http://digbig.com/3smq>>. Elsewhere on eBay.com, trading is very brisk with most Orwell titles being bid on. On eBay.de, you have a good chance of selling an Orwell if the book is in good enough condition.

**\*\*Tips\*\***

Funny enough, there is a mass-market version that is turning into a collectible set. In the early 1980's, Penguin brought out a set of Orwell books with black covers, and these versions collect impressive prices especially on eBay. I would normally say to avoid all mass-market versions of books, but Orwell seems to be an exception to this rule. At the very least, eBay Germany is a good venue to sell any mass-market versions of Orwell that you may have as the English students will snap them up.

As you can see though, the older the book, the more it is worth - just see that 1945 version going for almost \$2000, and prices like this are very common from what I'm told by booksellers. To get good money, aim for the older first editions and second editions. From what I can find out, Orwell signed some books and tried to be conscientious with answering his fanmail, but I don't know how much value is added to a signed book. Maybe someone out there can tell us.

**\*\*Related Web Sites\*\***

Since Orwell was British, the number of English-language sites out there are too many to count. However some of the best ones in my opinion are:

<http://www.k-1.com/Orwell>  
<http://orwell.ru>  
<http://www.orwelltoday.com>

This column is to help advise on which kinds of authors to watch out for and which ones to avoid when it comes to reselling. Please feel free to write to me at [camelotbooks@gmx.de](mailto:camelotbooks@gmx.de) and disagree with me, share your opinions, or nominate authors you think should be included. While not an "expert," I have a basic understanding of good authors, especially the kinds of authors to acquire or to avoid when it comes to reselling. By working together, perhaps we can compile a list of good-selling authors in the op market. Also feel free to post in the Book Forum at <http://www.auctionbytes.com/forum/phpBB/viewforum.php?f=5>.

---  
Mark O'Neill is originally from Scotland now living in Germany. Mark is an eBay seller, English teacher, freelance writer and is planning to start a satirical online newsletter which might lead him into the weird and wonderful world of publishing. He reads a lot of books, builds Web sites and collects anything he can get his hands on, in particular stamps and autographs. He is also in the long and arduous process of writing a horror novel. His Web site is at <http://continue.to/camelotonline> and his eBay ID is camelot-de. Mark is also the proud owner of four red-bellied Oriental toads and a bird called Rudy. You can email Mark on [camelot\\_de@gmx.de](mailto:camelot_de@gmx.de)

++++  
Visit the Book Forum at  
<http://www.auctionbytes.com/forum/phpBB/viewforum.php?f=5>  
++++

=====

4.) The Good Bookman: Lee Temares

=====

by Edith Reynolds

The Good Bookman is a regular feature profiling a bookseller in each column. The Good Bookman will reveal what our colleagues are doing in the hopes we can all learn from each other's experiences. To have your bookselling business considered for The Good Bookman, send an email to editor@bookologist.com.

**\*\*The Good Bookman's Name and Company:\*\*** Lee and Mike Temares

**\*\*Location:\*\*** Plandome and Manhasset New York, U.S.A.

**\*\*Web Site:\*\*** None

**\*\*Number of Years in Business:\*\*** 41 years

**\*\*How You Sell Your Books:\*\*** Open shop, at home, shows.

**\*\*Number of Books for Sale Online:\*\*** 0

**\*\*Specialty:\*\*** Children's Series.

**\*\*Number of Employees:\*\*** Just a husband who schleps and a son who repairs bookcases.

**\*\*Do They List and Price Your Books:\*\*** No.

**\*\*The Most Useful Computer Program Used:\*\*** Our 2 sons and daughter.

**\*\*Favorite Web Page:\*\*** Addall.com <<http://www.addall.com>>

**\*\*Your Biggest Blunder:\*\*** Buying what I thought was a rare series book and finding it had a laser dust jacket.

**\*\*Future Plans:\*\*** Having my husband learn to use the computer so he can list books online.

**\*\*Your Favorite Book:\*\*** The brass Keys of Kenwick.

To have your bookselling business considered for The Good Bookman, send an email to editor@bookologist.com. Booksellers outside North America are also welcome!

=====

5.) Letters to the Editor

=====

Hi Edith,

I (along with many others!) am currently trying to figure out what I should do with my Half.com inventory. I've decided that it will not be cost effective to sell a lot of my "stuff" on eBay, particularly with the recent fee increases. Most of my inventory was acquired at Friends of the Library book sales and thrift stores. I currently have accounts set up with several used book stores in my area. They offer book buying services for cash or trade credit. In addition to books, many of them take videos, CD's, DVD's, laser discs, and records. I've had some luck reselling, at a profit, items I have "purchased" with trade credit. Do you have any insider tips on the best way to work with used book dealers to obtain the maximum amount of cash or credit?

Regards,

Barb

The answer isn't as easy as it seems. It's a buyer's market at present and at the Greenwich Village Book Fair, two dealers were talking about selling their entire inventory (thousands of books). So books are out there, ready to be bought.

Some things to consider:

1. Dealers fall into two real categories when it comes to buying. There are those who buy a lot of stuff, whole inventories, etc. And there are those who buy only what they need or what has a high value (a sleeper). You are better off going to someone who will buy the entire lot first because the "picker" will leave you the chaff and you will be in the same boat as every library sale after the last day - trying to dump books no one else seems to want. You will spend a lot of time and energy trying to market them.

2. Dealers will give you pennies on the dollar for a run-of-the-mill book, that is, if they buy it. Know what you want to get from the sale of your books and be realistic. Some people who don't sell online have inflated prices, those prices that were put on the book when buyers still had to scour local shops for what they wanted. Their expectation about what their books are worth is not what an online seller can resell them for. A book's value is truly what somebody wants to pay for it. Sum up your investment and decide how badly you want to be rid of the inventory.

Do a little research and know how many copies of your editions are available and how much the dealer could buy them for retail online. You must negotiate for a price that suits both your needs.

Confidence in your stock will go a long way. Now it will depend on whether the dealer NEEDS your books. Find a seller who has inventory gaps you might be able to fill. One seller I know scours the Internet to see what's not available online and limits his purchases to those topics. If you know you have titles that a bookshop owner may need, sell those and insist that the deal include the whole shebang if you want to liquidate.

3. Consider putting them online through a selling venue like Alibris or Abe. If you don't want to acquire a regular bill for inventory, Alibris offers a good entry into the business. They will take a portion of the sale (20% - the same as a typical dealer discount). They do want an upload though of at least 500 books. Inventory management programs are out there to help you list your books for sale online. Homebase is free and Alibris also has a freebie but they want you to use it exclusively with them for the first year. Other programs may do more but there's a charge (see our article this week about Fillz.com).

4. Ask the dealers you know what they like to buy. They may have a customer with particular categories of interest, and every book they get goes directly to that collector.

Good luck.

@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@  
Visit the Bookologist Classifieds at  
<http://www.bookologist.com/cab/ads>  
@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@

=====  
6.) Call for Articles  
=====

The Bookologist is looking for articles about book selling and book collecting. Previous writing experience isn't necessary; a strong command of your topic and an ability to write clearly about it are. View author guidelines at  
<http://www.bookologist.com/cab/pages/write>

=====  
About the Editor  
=====

Edith Reynolds is an award-winning newspaper and magazine writer. She and her husband Dan own an antiquarian bookstore, The John Bale Book Company in Waterbury, CT. For the past 11 years, they have specialized in early Americana and rare bindings. Dan is a member of the ABAA (Antiquarian Booksellers of America Association), ILAB (International League of Antiquarian Booksellers) and OAUA (Online Auction Users Association). Edith recently launched American Booksellers, an e-fulfillment center for online booksellers. Visit their Web sites, <http://www.johnbalebooks.com> , <http://www.sellusyourbooks.com> and <http://www.americanbooksellers.com> .

=====  
About the Bookologist  
=====

The Bookologist is a free twice-monthly email newsletter for online booksellers. It is designed to help readers acquire better books, earn higher prices for them, expand and sharpen their knowledge of topics such as book condition, grading, terminology and first edition points, and more. The Bookologist is published by Steiner Associates, Natick MA, publisher of AuctionBytes.com <<http://www.auctionbytes.com>>. Subscribe to the Bookologist at <<http://www.bookologist.com>>. Classifieds at <<http://www.bookologist.com/cab/ads>>.

\*\*\*\*\*

Our Sponsors:

American Booksellers Fulfillment Service

<http://www.americanbooksellers.com/?bk>

\*\*\*\*\*

The Bookologist

Edith Reynolds, Editor: [edith@bookologist.com](mailto:edith@bookologist.com)

Ina Steiner, Publisher: [ina@bookologist.com](mailto:ina@bookologist.com)

David Steiner, President: [dsteiner@bookologist.com](mailto:dsteiner@bookologist.com)

Bookologist.com

c/o Steiner Associates

PO Box 668

Natick, MA 01760

<http://www.bookologist.com>

-----  
Thank you for subscribing to the Bookologist. The Bookologist email newsletter may be freely distributed in its entirety, so please pass it on. (Individual sections MAY NOT be copied and/or distributed without written permission of the publisher.) No part of this publication may be reproduced or stored in a retrieval system, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher. Steiner Associates makes diligent efforts to obtain accurate and timely information. However, Steiner Associates disclaims any liability to any party for any loss or damage caused by errors or omissions in the Bookologist, whether or not such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident or any other cause.

(c) Copyright 2004 Steiner Associates

You are currently subscribed as [mcrossan@abebooks.com](mailto:mcrossan@abebooks.com)

Email [feedback@bookologist.com](mailto:feedback@bookologist.com) to unsubscribe or subscribe.