“The complete guide to starting and running an online book business”

How to Sell Used Books on eBay, Amazon, and the Internet

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How to Sell Used Books on eBay, Amazon, and The Internet

The complete guide to starting and running an online book business

By Skip McGrath

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Forward

My grandmother taught me to read before I entered the first grade. I used to sit on her lap and she would first read to me and then have me sound out the letters and then the words. This was the beginning of my love of books.

I can’t remember why, but sometime around my 12th birthday, my grandmother extracted a promise from me that I would read at least one book a week. I was already an avid reader so it didn’t take that much effort to read a little more. But somehow over the years the habit stuck and I have read at least a book a week for my entire life. I won’t tell you how old I am, but that adds up to well over 2200 books. Actually it’s much more, because there are some weeks where I read two or even three books. And this does not count reading I did for school and while in the business world. I have probably read well over 4000 books since my 12th birthday.

The book business is a natural choice for someone who loves books. Life is always better when you are doing something you love. If you love books and reading as much as I do, you can find joy and satisfaction in helping others find what they are looking for and you can make some really good money doing it. What could be better?

Collecting books is such a passion with some collectors, that there is even a disease named after it: Bibliomania—literally, mad for books.

But even if you don’t love books as deeply as I do, as long as you like books and respect them for what they are—the world’s storehouse for ideas, you can build a nice little business while doing something you enjoy.

I am often asked, “Skip—will the Kindle and iPad kill the used book business?” The short answer is “No.” The longer answer is—there is no doubt it will have some impact, but there are over 50 million books in print in the English language alone, and it would be impossible to digitize all of them. At present, eBook readers account for about 22% of new book sales and less of used—or out of print book sales. Also, books that contain illustrations, maps, charts and graphs and so on, do not lend themselves to devices like the Kindle—although that could change.

In some ways reading devices are good for the used book business. Let’s say a new book comes out that the publisher would normally print 40,000 copies. But because of Kindle-type readers, they only print 30,000. Those 10,000 fewer books in print, will make the book harder to find a few years from now—and that will increase the price.
The Legal Stuff

This book contains statements and claims relating to how much money one can make using these methods. Please understand these are estimates and projections. The exact amount you can make will depend on your talent, your experience, and how hard you work at it.

In 2011, The Federal Trade Commission issued new regulations pertaining to how authors of books and videos could talk about earning potential of the topics they are writing about. The regulation stated “If I say I—or someone else, earned X dollars with this program or method, then I have to state the actual average of how much every person made using this book, method or program.” Well, as you can imagine, after selling hundreds of copies of this book, there is no way I could contact every person who bought the book and get them to tell me just how much they earned after reading it. As silly as that is—I still have to comply with the law. So here goes: “The average person who purchased this book earned something less than one penny (1¢).”

I ran that statement by my attorney and he assured me it complies with the new FTC regulations.

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Introduction

Selling books on eBay, Amazon, and the Internet is one of the easiest online businesses to start. The most difficult problem that eBay and other online sellers have today is finding merchandise they can sell at a profit. Selling used books solves this problem because there is a ready market for used books—and there is ample supply at great prices, as you will learn.

The used book business does not require a large investment to get started and the risk of failure is very low as long as you follow sound business practices and techniques. There are only two reasons people fail in this business:

- They are lazy and don’t do the work.
- They fight the market.

This is a business where it really pays to go with the flow.

When I started on eBay in 1999 I started selling small antiques, but very soon I also started selling books. I collect books on nautical and maritime history and also just sell a lot of the books I read once I finish them.

Long before eBay, at different times in my life, I was a book scout. A book scout is someone who finds books and sells them to dealers. I never did this full-time, but there were a couple of periods in my life when I needed some extra money and I could easily earn as much as $200 - $300 a week for about 10 hours of work scouting books. (I will reveal my book scouting secrets in Chapter 3.)

Since 1999 I have sold hundreds of books on eBay, but I don’t want to pretend to be a full-time book dealer, because I am not. But, I do know how to do this profitably and promise to tell you everything I know. And, just to make sure I was giving you the latest information, I conducted extensive interviews with several full time online booksellers before finalizing this book and had two of them read the manuscript and give me suggestions and corrections.

Nevertheless, there are other people who have written books on this subject. I have listed several of the best in the appendix. But before you rush out to Amazon.com and buy them, look for them in local used bookstores and at your local library. Almost every library in the country stocks books on the subject of book collecting and book selling.
Is This Business for You?

Okay, so why do you want to be in this business? You don’t have to “love” books as I do to do this profitably, but you do have to respect and care for them. Many book buyers are buying a book because they want to read it, but there are many buyers who are collectors. These folks are passionate about their books. They prefer to buy books from people who are also passionate about and respectful of books.

When I read a listing for a book on eBay or Amazon, I can always tell if the person selling the book is someone who is respectful and knowledgeable by the way they write their description. This is something you can’t fake.

So honestly, if your only goal to entering this business is to make money and you don’t really care for books, I would suggest you return this book for a refund and try something else. I am not trying to be facetious or disrespectful to you—I am just trying to be honest. There is something about the book business that is very hard on people who don’t approach it correctly.

Selling books on eBay, Amazon and other Internet sites is actually very easy. You can start with about $50–$100 dollars-worth of inventory. If you learn how to buy correctly, earning gross profits of 60% to 90% is not that difficult.¹

Here is an example: Just a few weeks before writing this chapter I found a book at our local thrift shop, American Folk Marquetry: Masterpieces in Wood, by: Richard Muhlberger, which I purchased for $2. I sold it on eBay at the Buy-It-Now price of $399. Since then I have seen that same book sell for as high as $500.

Some books can really surprise you. Earlier this year I was at a garage sale and bought a copy of Tying Dry Flies: The Complete Dry Fly Instruction and Pattern Manual by Randall Kaufmann for $1. Now I knew that books on fly-fishing and fly tying went for good money. I was hoping to get a least $25 to $50. I put it on eBay with a starting price of $19.99 and was shocked when the auction ended at $379.00 with over a dozen bidders!

Shortly after the first edition of this book was published, I received an email from a reader who bought this book. She went to a small town country auction and bought a box of children’s pop-up books that were all in pretty good condition. She bought the whole box for $45 and sold them quickly on eBay for a total over $400.

Now you won’t make finds like these every day, but you will make them if you are diligent and keep working at it.²

¹ I have earned over 1000% markup on many books I have sold.
As we pointed out, selling books online (and to local used book dealers) is a very easy business to start. The techniques are not hard to learn and you are part of a growing market. Online book sales have been growing at 30% per year over the past five years and show no sign of slowing down. Forrester Research reports that online book sales exceeded $9.4 billion in 2012 and slightly over half of that were used books.

I am often asked, “Can these same techniques be used to sell used VCR Tapes, CDs and DVDs?” The answer is yes, but I have not covered it here because Amazon and eBay have both changed the rules on selling CD’s and DVD’s. The new rules are such, that you will want to get a year or more experience selling books before you attempt selling in that category. And I plan to write a separate book on that subject later this year.

Work Part-time or Full-time

This is a great business to start part-time. If you work a full-time job, one handicap you will have is missing the Friday morning garage sales and estate sales. These are great places to get books. But there are sales on weekends and I will show you many other places to get books.

Realistically, how much can you expect to earn? That depends on a lot of factors that you will learn in the book. But, I can say with confidence that anyone who is willing to work at it and follow the steps in this book, can easily earn a few hundred dollars a week doing this part time (10-20 hours) and a thousand dollars a week or more working full time (40 hours+ a week). There are hundreds of small book dealers who work out of their homes who earn much more than that. You won’t do that in a matter of weeks—it will take a few months to build up to that level. But the beautiful part about this business is that it is self-financing. You spend $50 on books and say you get back $125. Now you spend that $125 on books and get back $275 or perhaps even more. Just keep repeating that until you have an inventory of several thousand dollars-worth of books and you will see a steady income.

So as I said above, I don’t promise you will do this overnight or within the first week or two. There is a learning curve. So don’t quit your day job just yet—it will take some

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2 One of your bonuses is a books wanted list compiled from hundreds of the book wanted lists on the Internet. It lists hundreds of books selling for over $200 that people are looking for. You can find it at the end of the book in the appendix.

3 I already said this in the introduction, but want to point it out again. Whenever I write about how much money someone can make, there is a new FTC regulation that requires me to state how much the “average” person makes who buys this book. Well as you can imagine I have no way of knowing that, so to comply with Federal Law, I hereby state that the average person who buys this book and uses these methods and techniques will make less than one US Cent. I will leave it to my readers who are all quite intelligent to read between the lines on that.
time. But you can start earning some money right away—probably by your second or third week. From there it is just a process of learning good sales techniques, building an inventory and growing your business.

**Where Can I Sell my Books?**

The title of this book is *How to Sell Used Books on eBay, Amazon, and the Internet*. I underlined the word “used” above because used books are the easiest to acquire and sell at a profit. I will also briefly show you how to acquire and sell new books. Although this can be profitable if done correctly—you need to know this can be risky.

I also underlined the word “and” because other markets for books have been growing. Today I doubt if you could make much of a living just selling books on eBay or its sister site, Half.com. The big daddy of online book sales is Amazon.com, but there are over a dozen other sites that are also good markets for your books. We will cover the best of these.

I would also like to point out that I am not providing basic “how to sell on eBay” and “how to sell on Amazon” instructions in this book. I do cover specifics to listing books on eBay, Half.com, and Amazon but if you have not yet learned to sell on eBay, I also sell *The Complete eBay Marketing System* and *The Complete Amazon Marketing System* on my website at [www.skipmcgrath.com](http://www.skipmcgrath.com). I also publish a book entitled, *eBay to Amazon*. Although it was written for eBay sellers who want to move to Amazon, it covers all the basics of selling on Amazon and you do not need any eBay experience to use the book.

**What Kind of Books Can I Sell?**

We will cover this area in great detail, but I did want to point out that I usually sell non-fiction. It is much easier to find non-fiction books that you can mark up and sell quickly.

Selling fiction, first editions, and literature is a specialty that takes a lot more study, knowledge, work, and risk. I am not saying you shouldn’t sell fiction or literature. If you are knowledgeable about authors and collector values in that area and have a love for fiction, then go ahead.

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4 Note” As this book went to press, Half.com announced they are doubling fees.
However, this book is aimed at beginners and will focus mostly on the non-fiction category of books. If you want to expand into fiction and literature, this can also be a very profitable area and I would encourage you to do so, but just remember that there is a steep learning curve.

If you do decide to enter the world of selling fiction and literature, you can apply most of the information in this book to your business, but you will want to read and study up on the specific issues related to these types of books. I have suggested some good books to study in the appendix. Probably the best one is Book Finds, How to Find, Buy and Sell Used and Rare Books by Ina Ellis (look for the third edition).

If you do choose to go into fiction your market is essentially to collectors who are very fussy. About the only books you can make money on are first editions. Just identifying a first edition takes a lot of skill. You will also probably want to specialize as the world of book collecting is so large and each genre so specialized that no one can know everything.

So unless you have a real interest in literature and are willing to invest some time and study, you may want to avoid it—at least for now and stick with non-fiction books. Nevertheless, as you are out buying books, you may want to keep your eyes open for early novels from famous authors. A good reference book like The Official Price Guide to Collecting Books, 6th Edition should be kept in the trunk of your car for those occasions when you do come across something. This way you can always check it. Sometimes you will get very lucky.

Just before Christmas last year, I was in a house that had some early copies of two Zane Grey novels. They were first editions—but not first printings—and they were in good condition. I bought both books for $5 and sold them for over $70 each. So even though I suggest you specialize in non-fiction, a little knowledge of fiction and literature can help you score the occasional deal.

Although this is an eBook, I have delivered it in a format that allows printing. I suggest you print it out yourself, or email the file to your nearest Office Depot, Staples, or Kinko’s and ask them to print it out on three-hole punch paper. Now you can put it in a binder to read and refer to whenever you need to.

So enough of the introduction and shameless self-promotion; let’s get started on your adventure in book selling.

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5 One of the big issues involved with selling fiction and literature is finding and selling First Editions. With non-fiction books, people usually want the latest edition unless it is a very famous title. Learning how to spot first editions is very important if you are selling fiction. Please see the appendix for the reference books on this subject, as it is too long for this book.
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Chapter 1

Organize Your Business for Success

If you have dreams of becoming a millionaire selling books on line, it is probably just that—a dream. But as I pointed out in the introduction, you can make some very good money. She didn’t want me using her name, but I have a friend who lives nearby who makes over $75,000 a year selling books and niche DVDs out of her home.

Making a living selling books online will depend on how hard you want to work and how well you run your business. Before you get started, one of the most important things you can do is to sit down, set some realistic goals, and create a plan. Ask yourself:

- How much time can I devote to the business?
- How much money can I invest to start with? ¹
- How much money do I need to make for this to be a worthwhile investment of my time and resources?
- Where do I want to be a year from now in terms of income and how much time I spend on this business?

Once you have asked yourself these questions (and written down the answers) you will want to put a plan together. Your plan would include your sales goals, list of materials, equipment and software you will need, a marketing plan (will you start with eBay, Amazon, or some other online seller?), and a cash flow projection (how much money will you spend on buying inventory, how much will you spend on fees and how much will you have left for yourself at the end of every month?).

You won’t be able to do these things now until you have finished reading this book. But, once you have finished, you will have a better feel for the time and resources required and you will want to come back to this chapter and go through these steps before you actually try and launch your business.

¹ You could start with as little as $25 or $50, but I think it is much more reasonable to start with a few hundred dollars if you want to grow your income quickly.
Creating a Brand Identity

You are going to be a business. A business needs a name and things like business cards, letterhead, a phone number, and so on. You also want to create a brand identity—and that starts with your name. Harry’s Discount Books is okay if you plan to be the low price competitor. It’s a general name—you could sell any type of book. But if you plan to specialize (we will talk about the pros and cons of this later), then you want a name and an identity that reflects your specialty. Some examples might be:

- The Sci-Fi Book Nook
- Ed’s Military Books
- The South Shall Rise Again Bookstore
- Cooks and More Books, etc.

Once you have a name, you will want to give some thought to a logo. Here again you will want a logo that says what kind of seller you are. Are you a generalist or a specialist? Several of the book sites you can sell on (including eBay) allow you to upload a logo. I tend to favor logos that also contain the name of the business. Here are a few examples below:

The advantage of this type of logo is that it can also be used as a banner simply by stretching it, and it has the advantage of reinforcing your name and/or the type of books you sell. People can remember a name easier than they can remember a logo. Think for a minute of some of the logos you can remember the best. Don’t most of them have names in them (7-11, Avis, IBM, Intel, Mac, etc.)?

Becoming a Business

Some other important things you will want to do are get a state sales tax number, register your business name, and open a commercial checking account.

Depending on the venue you sell on, you may need a state sales tax number. Unless you live in Oregon, Alaska, Delaware, New Hampshire or Montana (all states with no sales tax), when you sell on the Internet you will have to collect sales tax on sales made that are shipped to someone in the same state where you live. For example, I
live in Washington State. When I sell a book to someone in Seattle or Spokane I have to collect sales tax from that person and remit the tax to the State or Washington at the end of every quarter. But, if I sell a book to someone in California, New York, or any other state, I can ignore the sales tax. So be aware of your local and state taxes.  

Once you get a sales tax number you can usually register a business name at the same time—often in the same office or online at your State’s website. Registering the name will prevent others from using it. Once you have registered a name, you will want to visit your local bank and open a commercial checking account in your business name. All you have to do is show the bank your registration papers and they will let you open an account in that name.

A separate commercial checking account is important for two reasons. Although this book is primarily about selling used books, there are good sources of wholesale new books that are available from what are called Remainder Dealers and occasionally you may want to buy some actual new books from a distributor.

You will need both a state sales tax number and a commercial checking account before many of these people will sell to you. The other reason is bookkeeping and taxes. It is very important to keep good books and records. The easiest way to do that is to keep all of your business-related financial transactions separate in one account. This way you can use a program such as Quicken or QuickBooks to easily keep your records. I save a ton of money on tax preparation by simply printing out my QuickBooks account record at the end of the year and handing it to my CPA.

The last item is a dedicated telephone. You won’t necessarily need this at first, but at some point you will want a phone that you answer in a business name. Cell phones work fine for this, or you can get a separate number installed on your home phone called a ‘Distinctive Ring Line.” It is a separate number that you give out as your business number but it rings on your normal home line—except it rings with an entirely different sound allowing you recognize the call as a business call so you can answer it professionally with your business name. These lines typically cost far less than installing an additional phone line.

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2 Both eBay and Amazon have a system in place where you can enter the tax rate for your state and they will automatically collect the tax for you when the sale is made.

3 There is an online bookkeeping service that is attracting a lot of eBay and Amazon sellers called Outright at www.outright.com.
Computer, Software and Office Equipment

You are starting an online business, which means you are going to be spending a lot of time online. Time is money. So you need a decent computer and a fast Internet connection—either DSL or Cable. Now, once again don’t put down this book and rush out to Best Buy to get a new computer, but if you have an old slow computer, start budgeting to replace it once you get some cash flowing into your business.

You will also need a printer that can print postage labels or even a dedicated label printer. (Stamps.com has a sweet little set up that will save you time and money. It integrates a scale and postage label printer that is really simple and fast to operate). If you use the link www.stamps.com/skipmcgrath you can get a free postage scale, $40 worth of postage and other services for free. A service like this will save you tons of time and allow you to spend your time doing things that make you money.

Lastly, invest in some sort of back-up hard drive or online cloud system and get in the habit of backing up all of your files. I actually know a fellow who spent four straight days entering an inventory of over 600 books into his computer only to have a total system crash the day after he finished—and he had no backup.

Besides finding a place to store your books, you will also need a place to store your shipping supplies and a place to pack and ship your books.

Later in the book we are going to talk about scanning books. Today there are excellent smart phone apps that perform this service. So you may want to upgrade or invest in a smart phone. The popular apps are available for both Android and iPhones.

We will talk about specialized software related to the book business later, but you will need some general-purpose software such as Microsoft Office 4 to do word processing and spreadsheets.

The other important piece of software is an excellent virus protection program. Your business is going to be on that computer and you don’t want it crashed by some malicious virus. I use a program called PC Tools Antivirus you can buy online and download from the web. It is excellent and has never let me down. If you have a Mac, you should also invest in virus software. Macs used to be immune to viruses but they are now so popular that the evildoers who create viruses are now attacking Mac’s also.

4 Get the Student edition. It is $100 cheaper and does everything you will need. There are also some free programs that emulate office at free download sites like bluecow.com and shareware.com
Chapter 2

Books That Sell and Books That Don’t

I could also title this chapter, “What books should I buy?” Learning how, and exactly what types of books, to buy are the essence of this business and will largely determine your success.

The Economics of Book Buying

Let’s look at the economics of the book business: This information is not based on hard research, but on my experience and the experience of several professional booksellers I spoke with while researching this book. So, while everyone’s personal experience is a little different, you can rely on these formulas until you get your own experience and build your own database.

Now these results assume you follow our advice on buying books and don’t buy junk. I have intentionally used very conservative numbers. But as you gain experience you will actually be able to do much better than this—but these are probably typical for a new seller just starting out.

For every 100 books you buy:

- 1 or 2 books will be a real find and will sell quickly at an extreme markup (i.e. You buy a book for one or two dollars and it sells for $50 or more)
- 8 to 10 of the books you buy will sell very quickly (within 30 days) at a very high markup (200%–500% or more)
- Approximately 25 of them will sell within 60 days at a moderate markup (100%–200%)
- Another 40 or so will sell within 60–90 days at a small—but still profitable markup (50%–100%)
- The rest of them (about 20–25) will either never sell, or you will sell them at close to cost

So let’s work this out in dollars.

Assume you spent $200 buying 100 books (an average cost of $2 each).

5 As you become more skilled and more knowledgeable you will often find books that will sell for much more than this. I have several books in my maritime history collection that were purchased for less than $5 that are worth more than $200 each.
One book sells for $50 and another one for $75 = $125
You sell another 10 books for average $15 each = $150
Another 25 go for $8 each = $200
40 or so go for about $3.50 each = $140

**Total** = $615

You donate the rest to a thrift shop or your library = $40 tax deduction

Now this money didn’t roll in within one or two weeks, remember it probably took you a couple of months to sell all of these. But some money did come in right away and, as you will learn, you plow that money back into more stock. One of the most important facts you need to know about this business is the more books you have to sell, the more you will sell. When you only have a hundred or so books you might be selling five or six per week—but once you have about 500 books listed now you are selling several books every day.

I will explain some of the selling costs later, but let’s assume they were 15%. So your gross margin (less direct costs but before overhead) was: $615 - 15% - $200 (cost) = $322.75. That is a return on investment of 161% ($322 ÷ 200). In addition, if you are in the 28% tax bracket, your donation was worth an additional $11.20. (Don’t forget to get a receipt whenever you make a donation).

Okay, $322.75 doesn’t seem like a lot of money for all that work. But remember this is just a snapshot. In reality you are buying books every day and selling every day. Eventually you will have an inventory of a several hundred books and you will be selling a dozen or more every day. Depending on how hard you want to work or how much time you devote to the business, within a couple of months you could be selling an average of $200 to $400 a day. This can be even more if you specialize in higher-priced books, as we will show you later. And remember—every once in a while you will make that really amazing score where you find a book for a buck or two and sell it for several hundred dollars.

Also, don’t be intimidated by the idea of dealing with 500 to 1,000 books. You won’t be handling that many at one time. The way this business works you typically are dealing with 20 to 30 books at a time, but before long, you turn around and you have hundreds of books.

**What Books to Buy?**

The best books to buy are the ones that will sell. When you are starting out you will want to stick with non-fiction. As we pointed out earlier, fiction and/or literature, is a
somewhat specialized area. If you are knowledgeable in this area, then by all means go for it. But be careful. Collectible literature can be risky—sort of like walking through an off-leash dog park in your bare feet blindfolded. (Ask any bookstore owner and they will tell you that non-fiction books make up the majority of their sales.)

There are serious collectors of non-fiction books, but the largest market is people looking for the information contained in the books. As with any collectible, condition is very important, but this is less true for non-fiction than for fiction. But when you do run into those expensive collectible books, then condition assumes more importance. We will discuss this in detail later.

By far, the easiest books to find and to sell are *How To* books. The more specialized or unique the *How To* skill is, the higher the price you will get for a book. For example, a book on how to play golf might sell in the $2–$10 range. But a book on how to make hats recently sold on eBay for over $60. On the same day a popular, fairly easy to find book on glass blowing was selling on eBay for $40 when common how-to books on subjects like real estate were going for under $10. In general, the more specialized the book, the more money it will command.

On the next page is a list of other categories of non-fiction books that are steady sellers. I’ve put these on a new page so you can print those two pages out and take them with you when you’re sourcing books.
Best Selling Non-Fiction Books

- Art and art history books
- Books about antiques and collectibles
- Recent antique and collectible price guides (less than 2 years old)
- Almost any “how to” book—the more specialized the better
- Almost any book about an unusual or highly specialized art or craft
- Transportation—cars, trucks, ships, planes, trains, etc.
- Any specialized historical subject—nautical, civil war, cowboys and the old west, American Indians, history of The Middle East, etc.
- World War I and II
- Almost any pre-1960 book on weapons
- Books about armor and ancient weapons
- Books about gardening and landscape design
- Almost any book about the Civil War
- Early (Pre-1950) science textbooks
- Any science book by Isaac Asimov
- Aviation and space travel
- Books about historical aircraft
- Pre-1960 books on missiles and rocketry
- Sports (except recent biographies). Once again the more specific the book the better. A book about how to throw a good baseball pitch will sell for much more than a general book on baseball.
- Fishing—especially fly fishing, bass fishing and deep sea fishing
- Auto racing (Pre 1980 books on Auto racing will far outsell the newer books
- Horse racing and almost anything to do with horses
- How to draw, paint, sculpt, etc.
- Books with old maps and prints in them (typically these are pre 1940)
- Books with art prints in them (Audubon, Currier & Ives, Mark Escher, etc.)
- Early (pre-1950) books on law, mathematics, physics, chemistry and medicine
- Local or specific area/event history (History of Union County, History of San Francisco, The Great Chicago Fire, The Alaska Gold Rush, etc.)
- Native American and ethnic arts, baskets, weapons, etc.
- Photographic collections (Helmut Newton, Ansell Adams, Annie Liebovitz, etc.)
- Books with picturesque views of the early days in America
- Early atlases (pre 1950). The ones with colored maps are best
- Books of old burial records
- History and genealogy of famous family names (Wilks, Jefferson, Washington, Kennedy, etc.)
- Early Bibles, religious texts, and hymnals
- Early (pre-1950) books on psychology, and psychiatry
- Early self-help books (Pre-1960)
- Illustrated books about biology, botany, and animals
- History of theater, movies, and music
- Books about Jazz and folk music
- Pre-1970 music songbooks (including sheet music)
- Cookbooks (the specialized ones or those by famous chefs sell best)
- Children’s books (those with pop-ups that are not torn or damaged bring huge money)
- Large print editions of popular books (make sure the regular print edition is selling at a decent price. If it is, the large print edition will usually sell for 20%–50% more.)

At first you will want to carry this list with you, but over time you will find you have memorized it and you will have a natural feel for what books sell. But starting out, consider this your money-document.

As I pointed out earlier the more specialized the subject the more a book can bring. Here are some examples of books on really unique or specialized subjects and the kind of money they have sold for at the time of this writing:

- Calculus, Early Transcendentals by C. H. Edwards $2,100.00
- CHESS LIFE 1956-2006 Chess Review 1957, 60 B. Fischer $1,999.00
- Asimov’s Guide to Science $800.00
- Children of alcoholic mothers by Aronson, Marita $475.00
See what I mean when I say specialized. You may think you will never run into, or have trouble finding books like these, but you can. The first three were bought at garage sales, and the rest of them came from thrift shops and library sales.

Another category of books that sell well are recent and current college textbooks. Obviously these are seasonal—selling near the beginning of college semesters.

**Books to Avoid**

Another name for this section could be *Never Buy These Books*. It is not that these books will never sell, but they are harder to sell and you will most often end up donating them to a thrift shop.

- Biographies unless they are about historical figures who have been dead at least 100 years. For example, a biography of Benjamin Franklin or the artist Degas could be worth big money, whereas a biography of Jimmy Carter or Barbara Streisand is worth very little and would take forever to sell.

- Sets like the Time Life or Readers Digest unless the set is complete and in excellent condition—even then, these are slow sellers. But they can sell for good money when they do. Never buy one or just a few books from a set. Only buy complete sets. (An exception is the Time Life series on Cowboys and the Old West. Individual books are in demand by collectors trying to build a complete set).

- Self-Help books less than 20-years old
- Readers Digest condensed books
- Fiction unless it is a first edition in excellent condition including the dust jacket
- Ex Libras (books that came out of a lending library)
- Outdated textbooks unless they are very old (pre-1950)
- Outdated computer books, again unless they are early (pre-1970)
- Post 1950 Encyclopedias
- Large heavy books that are difficult to ship
- Romance novels
- Damaged, mildewed, musty-smelling books or books with missing covers

In general, you only want to buy books in very good condition. The only exception to this is a very rare book and even here you want to be careful.

The other thing to watch out for is the dust jacket. In general, books with dust jackets are worth far more than those without. The condition of the dust jacket is also important. A dust jacket with even a small tear will detract from a book’s value.

**Buying Value**

It will take you some time to learn which books will sell quickly and for a high price. And, you will certainly make lots of mistakes that will end up as donations to the local thrift shop. But over time you will learn to spot the books you want to buy and avoid those that won’t sell.

Remember earlier where we discussed the economics of book buying and selling? Whenever you take the books that won’t sell to a thrift shop, take the time to look through them so you will remember not to buy those same books again in the future.

I like to concentrate on books that will sell for over $10 or more. If you buy a book for 25¢ and sell it for $3 that is a 1200% markup. But it is still only $2.75 profit. When you consider that you have to buy the book, perhaps clean it, store it, take a photo, write a description, sell it, get paid, and ship it—that is a lot of work to do for $2.75. If I am going to do all that work I would much rather sell a book for $10–$20, or even more to make it worth my while.

When dealing in low-priced books (those that will sell for less than $25) I never pay more than 25% of what I think I can sell it for.
Chapter 3

Where to Find Used Books

The answer to that question is everywhere. Books are all around you. You can buy them from garage sales, estate sales, thrift shops, flea markets, antique shops, library sales, and I have even found boxes of books at my local dump. The other place to buy books is from other booksellers and used bookstores. Once you learn the market for books you will soon learn that some other sellers often don’t know what they have and what it is worth.

Garage Sales

Don’t laugh, but this is my number one source of books. I defy you to get up early on a Friday or Saturday morning, visit at least five garage sales, and not find at least 20 to 30 resalable books. In all honesty you seldom find really valuable books at garage sales, those can be found by other methods that I outline below. But, garage sales can be a great source of the everyday books that are steady sellers in the $10–$20 range and you will occasionally find books that will sell for much more. One of my biggest garage sale finds was a 1950 era book on nuclear energy that I bought for $1.00 and sold for over $200.

There are two tricks to finding books at garage sales. The first is to get up early and be there when the sale starts so you beat out the other book dealers who are doing the same thing. Look at the ads for garage sales and see if they mention books in the ad. If they do, these should be the first ones you hit.

One of the things I like about garage sales is that bookstore owners rarely go to them because it is very difficult to find good fiction and literature in good condition at a garage sale. But you will often find good non-fiction at garage sales that you can make money on.

The second trick is to ask the garage sale seller if they have any books. This is actually the most productive method of finding good saleable books!

People often have old books and they don’t think to put them out when they have a garage sale. If I visit a garage sale and do not see any books, I simply ask the owner if they have any books they would like to sell. Out of every three or four people I ask, one or two of them will say yes. They will either start bringing out books as I wait, or sometimes will even invite me into the house to look at their bookshelves. I have even had people make an appointment for me to come back later and look at their books.
Estate Sales

Estate sales are a little different. Estate sales are run by professionals. The books are typically cataloged and priced. Some estate sales professionals are very knowledgeable about books and they might be priced too high to make money on. That is okay because if they are, the other dealers will not buy them either. But, to be honest, Estate Sales are where you usually find the better books that will sell for higher dollar value—and the books tend to be in better condition than they are at garage sales.

You are unlikely to find books at an estate sale for a buck or two. Often you may have to pay $5, $10, or $20 or more, so this is a situation where you really need to know what books are worth. Don’t worry; this knowledge will come over time. But when you are just starting out, you will want to be very careful about buying expensive books.

The best strategy is to get to an estate sale early. If you see books you want that are priced right just buy them then. If the books are priced too high, most of them will not sell. In this case go back to the sale just before they close and the seller will typically mark them down by as much as 50%.

I once went to a sale where the seller had the complete works of W.E.B. Griffin (military fiction) in hard back—22 books in all. They were in excellent condition—all with dust jackets and all but 2 were first editions.

I usually stick to non-fiction books, but I knew this author has a large following and they would sell quickly. The problem was the estate sale agent was asking between $5 and $10 a book. I went back at the end of the day and only one of the books had sold. I offered her $50 for the whole box. We dickered and settled on $65. That worked out to just over $3 per book. I sold all 21 of the books within three weeks on eBay and Amazon at prices between $10 and $20 each. The average was around $14 a book. That was a 450% return on my investment.⁶

Thrift Shops

The pickings at thrift shops can be pretty slim for several reasons. First of all, people like me donate essentially un-saleable books to thrift shops. Also, book scouts and dealers check them out frequently. Lastly, the thrift shop operators don’t really understand book values or condition and will often dump them in a pile where they get damaged.

Nevertheless, you will occasionally find good books in thrift shops. You just have to be patient and comb through the stock. The thrift shops in our town only take donations

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⁶ At that same sale I also bought some 1940s science & physics’s textbooks that I made a ton of money on.
on certain days. The donations come in and it is usually the next day before they get stocked. So that is when I go in. That way, I am seeing the new stuff before others get there. The good thing about buying from a thrift shop is the price. Thrift shops really underprice their books. I recently found a history of Porsche motorcars for 50¢ that I sold on eBay for $60. It had a very small crease on the inside of the dust jacket. Otherwise it was in perfect condition.

The other way to get really great stuff is to develop a relationship with the staff. If they know you buy often and what you are looking for, they will often call you when something comes in. One lady in our town is an eBay seller who specializes in jig saw puzzles. She frequents all of the thrift shops on a regular basis. She never fails to bring the staff some cookies or donuts. They always call her when something comes in that they know she buys.

Another option is to volunteer to work there. As a volunteer—especially on donation day—you will get first look at all of the good stuff.

**Local Auctions**

Small local auctions are an excellent place to buy books. Most book dealers attend professional book auctions, but very few ever attend country or small-town local auctions. Not every auction will include books, but many of them do. Books are usually sold in “lots,” consisting of a box of books. So you will often have to take junk to get the good stuff, but I always find enough good stuff to make this profitable—and this is where I find a lot of really valuable books.

The key is to attend the preview and see if there are any books you want. You can then decide to attend the auction, or you can just leave a proxy bid with the auctioneer and they will call you if your bid wins.

**Library Sales**

This is one of the best places to find books. Unfortunately, they don’t happen very often. So when I go to a library sale I really stock up.

There are two kinds of books sold at Library sales. Books that were donated by people that the library doesn’t want or have room for, and *Ex Libras*—books that were in the lending library and the library is discarding. *Never* buy an Ex Libras book unless it is extremely rare and you know 100% for certain you can sell it. One exception is that if you need the dust jacket. Let’s say you have or can find good copies of a certain book, but the dust jackets are usually torn or clipped. If you can but the Ex-Libras version and the dust jacket is in good condition, then you can marry the two.
I find it amazing that librarians know everything about books except their value. It is not hard to find books at library sales for around a dollar or so that will sell for $10, $20, $30, or even more.

Some libraries even have a small bookstore in the library that is open every day where they sell books. People come in all the time and drop off books to donate. The librarian usually looks through the books quickly to see if there is anything they want to put in the lending library, takes those out, and then hands the rest over to the bookstore to sell. I have often found books in the library bookstore for less than $3 that I can sell for $10, $15 or even much more. I once found a book on the history of musical instruments that the library bookstore was selling for $5.00. I sold it on Amazon.com for $75.

Library sales happen so infrequently (usually about twice a year) that is pays to get on the mailing list for several libraries in your area. When I was into book scouting, I was on the list for the library in every town within a 50-mile radius of my home.

The other thing you should do at Library sales is tell the people running the sale that you are a book dealer and give them your phone number. It is quite normal for the library people to call you at the end of the sale and offer to sell you the remaining books as a lot. I have never personally done this, but one of my readers bought a lot of over 200 leftover books for $50. She had to donate about ½ of them to the thrift shop, but she sold the rest of them for prices between $3 and $25.

Some libraries offer an early opening session to book dealers for a price. When our local library has a sale I can get in one hour early for an admission fee of $10.

**Flea Markets and Antique Shops**

I grouped these together as they are not my favorite place to shop for books for two reasons. One is usually the price. Antique sellers are looking for retail. And, they often have very old books on the theory that an older book is more valuable, but this is not always the case.

The problem with flea markets and rummage sales is usually the condition. Flea market books are usually tossed in boxes with no regard for damage. Nevertheless, it does pay to shop these venues once in a while because you will often find a gem that has been overlooked. I once found an early copy of Winston Churchill’s History of WWII at a flea market in New York with a nice bonus. Neatly folded in the pages of the book was a WWII vintage English Pound note that ended up being worth over $50.
**Used Bookstores**

We are going to talk about used bookstores in the next chapter on Book Scouting. Almost every town in America has a used bookstore. I live in a town of only 10,000 people and we have three. Because they also sell retail, you wouldn’t think that used bookstores would not be a source of merchandise, but they are. There are two opportunities to buy saleable books from these sources.

Many used bookstores specialize. So when they get books they don’t want they tend to sell them cheaply. For example, there is a very well-known bookstore in Seattle that specializes in fiction and literature. But since they often buy books from estates in bulk they often end up with some non-fiction books as well. These are always found in the back of the store on a sale table. I once found a set of medical books from the 1920s on the sale table that I bought for $10 and sold for $275.

The other opportunity is to buy books on regional history and geography. Here in the Pacific Northwest where I live, any book about the indigenous Native Americans, Northwest art, the fishing industry, Eskimos, Alaska, Northwest History, and so on, sell at very high prices. But if you walked into a bookstore in Pittsburgh or St. Louis and saw a book on those subjects it would probably be selling for next to nothing.

The same would go for a book about cowboys or a travel journal of the Deep South. Those books wouldn’t sell very well in Seattle or Portland. But put them on the Internet and the whole country opens up to you. That book you found for next to nothing in Cleveland about the California Gold Rush could bring really big bucks from a buyer in Sacramento, California.

**Book Fairs**

Book fairs are shows where booksellers bring their wares for a one or two-day show. Most book fairs are small. They may be held in a small town community center or school and typically have anywhere from a dozen to fifty or so exhibitors. Most of these dealers are pretty savvy and know what they have. Nevertheless, I always go to book fairs and always seem to find something. Most of these dealers specialize, but like bookstores they often end up with books that they don’t want to carry. They will often sell these at bargain prices just to clear them out.

The problem with book fairs is that there are so many dealers there who really know what they are doing that one dealer will often spot a book from another that is underpriced and buy it before you get there. Most book fairs charge $3 to $5 to get in, but most of them offer a special ticket for about $20 that will get you in an hour before opening. You should always do this, as this is the best opportunity you will have to make a score.
I collect books on Naval warfare and maritime history. I was at a fair looking at books from one dealer who had a large selection of books in my field. I noticed a box of old books (1960s vintage) about sports cars. He sold the whole box to me for $25 just to get rid of them. When I got them home and unpacked them I found I had 14 very nice older books. Two of them were about the early days of sports car racing in Europe. I sold them on eBay for prices between $25 and $75 each.

Likewise, I have found good books on my collectible topic, Naval warfare, cheaply from dealers who specialized in other subjects. But this only happens because I am there during that first hour before the general public comes in. If I had gotten to that fair any later another dealer would have snapped up those books on sports cars.

The other advantage of attending books fairs is that you learn a lot. You get to see which books on which topics are selling at high prices.

**How to Bring Books Out of the Woodwork**

There are literally millions of valuable books sitting in people’s homes, attics, garages and storage lockers. But unless someone has a garage sale or takes them to a used bookstore to sell, or donates them to a thrift shop, they will just sit there gathering dust for years.

The answer is to advertise. This is the absolute best way to find saleable books in large quantities.

Usually a small classified ad is all it takes. For example, here is an ad I have used over and over with success:

**Book collector will pay cash for old Non-fiction books on Art, Photography, Trains, Sports and History. 360-555-1212**

You can change the words in the ad to reflect what you are looking for. Don’t take this method lightly: IT REALLY WORKS!

Run this ad in your local paper and classifieds like the Little Nickel. Put in on bulletin boards at your local supermarket, Laundromat, the senior center, and other places that allow you to post ads. Be sure and post it regularly on Craigslist and other free classified sites. You will be amazed at the calls you get. Don’t be disappointed if it doesn’t work the first week. For some reason, people need to see the ad a few times before they will call. But try it and you will see how well it works.

One bookseller I know makes up door hangers and pays kids to distribute the flyers to houses. He picks neighborhoods with upper scale houses and areas where seniors live.
He gets about 25 calls for each 500 flyers he hands out. But sometimes this results in him being able to buy whole collections of books.

**How Much to Pay for Books**

This is a really important question, and getting the answer right is essential to your success. Remember the first rule of selling any used item be it a book, antique or whatever:

**You make money when you buy—not when you sell.**

If you pay too much for something you might not be able to sell it at a profit. Some books will sell very quickly and others will take more time. Carrying inventory costs you money because your investment capital is tied up when it’s sitting on your shelves.

A used bookstore owner will pay about 25% of what he or she thinks they can sell a book for. But bookstores have constant traffic and the internet has made selling online much more competitive. My personal threshold is 10% to 15%. I will pay 15%, or occasionally as much as 20%, of the price I think a book will sell for. If I can pay as little as 5%, that is even better. Remember that somewhere between 10% and 25% of the books you buy will either not sell at all, will take a long time to sell, or will sell for much less than you estimated.

Now there is an exception. Once you really get to know your books and you have confidence in your buying ability, you will often be in a used bookstore or at a book fair and see a book priced near its selling price but still below what you know you can get for it. I once found a copy of a very expensive book on collectible woodworking tools. The dealer wanted $200 but I knew I could sell it for $300 or more. I negotiated him down to $170. That is still way over my threshold, but this was a slam-dunk—I could make $100 or more easy. And I did. I listed it on Amazon for $375 and it sold within 24 hours.

One of the biggest problems new booksellers have is enforcing this discipline on themselves. If you start buying too many books that you can’t triple or quadruple the price or more, you will begin to lose money and this will translate into not having any fun. If you are not making good money, this business loses its luster very fast.

When I am at a garage sale and I see a box of books selling for $1 each, I only pick the ones I think will sell for $10 to $20 or more. I am not always right, but that is my goal. If I find several books from one sale, I always ask the seller if he will take less for them. For example, if I found seven books I like, I will walk up to the sellers with a big sincere smile on my face and say: “Hi. I found seven books I like in your $1 box. Will you take $5 for all seven?” Nine times out of ten they will say yes.
Notice in that paragraph above that I mentioned books that will sell for $10 to $20 or more. You can easily find books for 25¢ to 50¢ that will sell for $3 or $4. Now that is a great markup. I covered this earlier, but it is so important I want to stress it again: If you buy a book for a quarter and sell it for $4 you have made a 1600% markup—Wow! But you have only made $3.75 before selling fees. When you pay $1 and sell a book for $10, you make about $7.50 after selling fees. For the same effort you can make a lot more money on a more expensive book.

When you sell a book and make $3.75 each, you would have to list, sell, pack, and ship 533 books just to make $2,000. But if you pay $3 for a book that sells for $21 you make $18 a book. Now you only have to sell, pack and ship 111 books to make the same amount of money.7

Having said that, it is okay to buy and sell those lower priced books when you are starting out—say for the first three or four weeks. But once you start to get a handle on what will sell, you want to move up the pricing scale as quick as you can.

**How to Find Valuable Books Quickly**

Sometimes you have to spend money to make money. How would you like to walk into a garage sale or a thrift shop where dozens of books are laid out and instantly know which are the most valuable books? If you have a smart phone (iPhone or Android you can get instant book values.

One service is from a company called ASellerTool (www.asellertool.com). For a monthly subscription fee you can simply enter the ISBN number of any book and it instantly tells you what the book is selling for on Amazon and the Amazon sales rank. For one smartphone, subscription fee is **$40 per month.** See the table below for discounted prices for additional devices or with longer subscription period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASellerTool Memberships</th>
<th>Per Month</th>
<th>Per 6 Months Save 5%</th>
<th>Per 12 Months Save 15%</th>
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<td>$75</td>
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This subscription includes both the service of downloading pricing database onto the phone and the service of real-time scouting.

Here is what it looks like on your phone:

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7 Packing and shipping books is a lot of work. Later when we discuss selling on Amazon I am going to show you a way to have this done for you.
ASellerTool also offers a more expensive system you may want to invest in as you grow your business. This is a tool that incorporates a bar code scanner with a PDA. Instead of entering the ISBN numbers, you simply scan the bar code on the back of any book and it instantly tells you the price. (Note—don’t put the book down and just buy one of these. Keep reading as there are some other options as well).

The advantage of this advanced PDA system is that you don’t have to be online with Amazon. Here is an outline of the features and benefits:

**Affordable to Anyone:** No cell phone service or Internet connection required. Works with most of the old and new Pocket PCs on the market.

**INSTANT Pricing Result:** Result returns in less than a second. It is 5-10 times
faster than using a cell phone. With a scanner and earphone (both are optional) at a budget price, you can scan and hear the pricing result INSTANTLY.

**Comprehensive pricing information returned:** ASellerTool returns the lowest 3 used prices, lowest new price, sales ranking, title, number of used offers, number of new offers, item conditions, buyer waiting (if item has no seller listing).

**Discreet:** If your PDA is equipped with Bluetooth you can put leave your PDA in your pocket and just hold a tiny scanner in your hand.

**Accessible to all ISBN & UPC for books, VHS, DVD, music CDs, software and games:** ASellerTool offers the best ISBN coverage in the market. Your PDA will contain information for close to 99% of all books, videos, music CDs, and 99.9% of books with value greater than $3 from Amazon marketplace.

**High Accuracy in Pricing Information:** Pricing data from Amazon for ALL the ISBN & UPC items updated once a day. Books with higher value are updated more than once a day.

**Flexible to Your Pricing Preference:** You can configure your buying triggers for different minimum price with different rank. For example, you can set lower minimum price with lower rank and higher minimum price with higher rank.

**Fast to Download:** You can download the whole ISBN & UPC database in 10 min to 30 min. With WI-FI support, you can download anywhere!

**Large Numeric Keypad:** Large Numeric keyboard for easy manual input for books without a barcode. Large font size for displaying pricing info for easy reading.

**Optional Real Time Scouting:** If you have Android phone or iPhone then you can enable optional real time scouting to lookup any book on Amazon to see what it is selling for. This really helps your buying decisions.

The PDA scanner service starts at $30 a month, but they have other packages available. If you don’t have a PDA, you can buy one from them that comes with the scanner and the software loaded and ready to go. You can read about the various systems at:

[www.asellertool.com](http://www.asellertool.com).
A Seller Tool is a highly advanced system but it is very expensive, especially for the beginner. So here is a much cheaper solution. It won’t do everything A Seller Tool can do, but it really good and really affordable.

**Profit Bandit**

When I wrote the first edition of this book, ASellerTool was the leading company on the market. But since then smart phones have taken over the world. Today there are several applications (Apps) for both iPhones and Android. Probably the most popular one is Profit Bandit from Seller Engine. Note – See below: Amazon also has a free seller app, but it is somewhat limited.

Here are some of the features of Profit Bandit:

- **Calculate shipping costs** using USPS or Royal Mail (UK) rates.
- **See your own offer** highlighted in red (Pro Merchants only)
- **Compare prices** on collectible items in addition to new and used merchandise.
- **Factor local sales tax** into your product cost.
- **Shake to scan feature** makes it easy to check prices, even when your hands are full.
- **Alerts vibrate your phone** when a product has outstanding sales rank or profit.
- **Scan now and review the results later** with Batch Scan mode.
- **Export a CSV file** with product information to upload directly to Amazon or SellerEngine Plus.
- **Bluetooth scanner support** (available via additional in-app purchase) makes it easy to scan without using your phone’s camera.
- **Search other sites**, including CamelCamelCamel, eBay and PriceGrabber from within Profit Bandit.
- **Preload searches on other sites** to save time while scouting. Tap and hold the left or right side of the screen to view.
Later, when I talk about Amazon’s FBA program, I will tell you about another company that has a pricing/scanning solution, so you may want to hold off until you can evaluate all three services and tools.

Finally, there is another service called Scan Power at www.scanpower.com. That company also offers other services but you can buy their scanning tool just on its own. Here is what it gives you:

- Number of offers
- Pricing of all the other sellers of that book
- Conditions of the different books for sale in that title
- Size and weight of the book
- An image of the book so you know you have the same edition

Lastly, Amazon has recently introduced a smart phone app called the Amazon Seller App.

It doesn’t give as much info as the paid services listed above but it’s free.
Chapter 4

Scouting Books for Fun and Profit

This is a fairly short chapter, but I think you will find it very interesting. Book scouting is fun and can be very profitable. What is a book scout? Simply put, it is someone who buys books for others—usually dealers and used bookstores. *Wait a minute Skip. You said this book was about making money selling books online.* That’s right, it is, but let me explain.

When you are doing all the things in the previous chapter to find books, you will certainly come across a lot of books that won’t sell for $20 or more. Also, if you are doing this business part-time you may not have the time to list and sell hundreds of books. So there is another way.

Bookstore owners don’t have time to scout books themselves. They rely on book scouts and just ordinary people with books to sell to walk into their stores. When you sell books to a used book dealer he (or she) can pay you in one of two ways—cash or trade credit.

The formula used by most bookstores is 15-25% cash or 25% to 50% trade credit of the estimated selling price of the book.8

Basically the storeowner looks at a book, and using his or her experience, takes a guess at what it will bring. He will usually give you 15% to 25% of that price if you want cash—or 40% to 50% if you are willing to take trade credit to use in his store (each store is a little different—stores in big cities typically give less).

Unless you need the money to pay your rent, always take the trade credit! I should also point out that this amount is negotiable. If you regularly bring a store good stuff, they will often agree to a higher trade credit, but will rarely agree to a higher cash payment.

I can go out on any Friday or Saturday and hit a few dozen garage sales and load my car up with several dozen books. I might spend $25 to $75, but I can often turn those books into as much as $200 to $400 trade credit. I know, I have done this many times.

8 I went to a new bookstore who offered 20% cash and 40% trade credit. I said “no thank you” and walked out. He followed me out to the street and said “but I really don’t want to buy all of your books.” I said: “OK, I will take your 40% credit if you take all of my books.” He said: “No, I can’t do that.” So I just kept walking and went to the next store. I drove by his place a few weeks later and he had a Going Out of Business Sale sign on his door.
Now, once I have that nice fat trade credit I walk over to the locked case where the book dealer keeps his most valuable books—those that sell for $100 or more. I can buy one or two of these books with my trade credits, put them on eBay or Amazon and make a couple of hundred dollars with just one or two sales. I could probably have made a little more selling all those individual books, but I would have had to take all the photos, list dozens of auctions, ship the book, and communicate with the customers. Whereas, with this method I made a few hundred dollars with very little time or effort. This is the perfect way to go for the part-time seller who doesn’t have a lot of time.

Now I admit, at first you will not be as successful doing this as I am, but then I have years of experience. You will have to do this a few times to learn what the booksellers are looking for and what they will pay for. But remember, any books they don’t take you can still sell online. Just because a dealer doesn’t take a certain book, does not mean the book won’t sell. It may be that he already too many books on the same subject, or doesn’t want books on that particular topic.

Many used bookstores specialize. When you first visit your local used bookstores, it pays to chat with the owner or the buyer and ask them what they are looking for. Write this down in a notepad and use it while you are out scouting.

In reality I probably wouldn’t give the bookstore all of my books. When I buy books I usually find three or four that will sell for really good money. Those I will sell on eBay or Amazon myself. But all of those others I can usually trade to one of the three bookstores in town for credit.

It does take a little experience to make this work. First of all, any given bookstore will not take everything you have. You may have to hit two or three stores to get rid of the entire stock. But once you have done this for a while, you will begin to get a feel for the kind of books each storeowner likes to buy and you will look for those books.

For the books you end up being stuck with, don’t forget the tax deductibility of donating them. Even though you bought a book at a garage sale for 50¢, when you donate it to a thrift store you can deduct a reasonable estimate of its value. Typically, this is 25% to 50% of the original cover price. If you buy a book for 50¢, and the cover price is $21.95, you could easily take a $10 tax deduction for that book. If you are in the 28% tax bracket, that will put $2.80 in your pocket at tax time. Be sure and get receipts. Most thrift shops let you fill in the value. If you think this is unreasonable or

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9 When you are first starting out, visit your local used bookstores and ask the owner what he or she is looking for. Every store is different. One store may take western novels whereas another one will not. One store near me specializes in history and historical fiction. Whenever I spot a book on those topics I know he will always give me top dollar for it and I don’t hesitate to buy it.
dishonest, remember that Bill Clinton donated his used underwear to a charity while he was President and took a $5 deduction for each item. It raised a stink with the public (so to speak), but it was perfectly fine with the IRS.

So how do you scout books? Just re-read the information above. This is what full-time professional book scouts do. They advertise, go to garage and estate sales and haunt thrift shops. Before the advent of eBay and the Internet, a professional book scout could make $1000 a week or more. Today many of them are still doing this, but they are selling on the Internet themselves instead of selling to the bookstores. Consequently, the bookstores have a harder time finding good merchandise so they are usually very willing to work with you. A good scout these days can make a lot more than $1000 a week.

You can use your book scouting skills in several ways. Books are a small part of my current online business. I honestly don’t have the time to continually scout, list, sell, pack, and ship hundreds of books a month. If I spend a day buying books I might come home with 40 to 50 books. I go through them and pick out the 10 most valuable books and sell them myself on eBay or list them on Amazon. Then I made the rounds of the three used bookstores in town. I can usually get rid of all but a handful of books that way and end up with a nice trade credit. Now I have a choice on the rest. I can just donate them to the thrift shops or I can list them on Amazon at some low price so they sell quickly or a slightly higher price and just wait until they sell.

As soon as I my trade credits reach $100 I usually go back to the bookstores and buy something expensive that I know will move quickly on eBay or Amazon.

10 I will cover this later in detail, but Amazon has a service called FBA – Fulfillment By Amazon. You send all of your books into Amazon’s warehouse, and when the book sells Amazon handles the fulfillment to the customer so you are not packing and shipping books every day. And it gets even better—You can also list the book on eBay. When it sells to your eBay customer, you log into Amazon and Amazon will ship the book directly to your eBay customer for you.
Chapter 5

How and Where to Buy New Books

This book is mostly about selling used books for one simple reason: used books are where the money is. As we have seen, you can easily find used books that you can mark up 500% or even much more. But with new books it is common for book sellers to work on margins that are much less—often as little as 30% margin. This makes buying new books much more risky. If just a few books don’t sell, you don’t have the offsets to still make a profit. However, there are some opportunities to make money with new books so we are including this information in case it interests you.

There are three basic ways to buy new books:

- Direct from the distributor
- The Remainder table at large bookstores
- From Remainder or liquidation dealers

**Book Distributors**

There are a few large national distributors that supply most bookstores. The largest one is Ingram Books. Ingram is the largest wholesale book distributor in the country. They are the distributor for most of the large national publishers such as McGraw-Hill, Random House, Harper Collins, Simon & Shuster, Penguin, and more. They work with most independent bookstores and deal with lots of online sellers, both large and small. Virtually any book that you can find at your local Barnes & Noble is available from Ingram. Here is their website: [www.ingrambook.com/new/booksellers.asp](http://www.ingrambook.com/new/booksellers.asp).

Below is a list of the other distributors. You can find the website for any of them by typing their name into the Google search bar. Some of these distributors will drop ship books directly to your clients. This is a great way to go because you don’t have to carry inventory.

Ingram has also recently instituted a drop ship program. You have to guarantee to buy at least $10,000 worth of books per year to participate. Your cost is 60% of the cover price plus 50¢ on each book they drop ship. This isn’t much margin, so if you do this you need to work with higher priced books. That way you are making a high dollar amount on each sale and you don’t have to sell as many books to reach your $10,000 annual minimum. I wouldn’t try and sell popular or best-selling books as these are routinely heavily discounted. But if you specialize, or sell in a niche—especially if you have a customer list or following, this can be a very profitable thing to do. Remember, in general, the more specialized a book the more likely it will sell for the full cover price.
price. And, conversely, the more popular a book is, the more likely it will be discounted.

Here are some other book distributors who will work with online sellers:

**Spring Arbor** is a subsidiary of Ingram and distributes Christian Books.


**Harry N. Abrams, Inc.** Harry N. Abrams, Inc. (HNA) is the preeminent American publisher of high-quality art and illustrated books.

**International Specialized Book Services** North American distributor for over sixty academic overseas publishers specializing in topics including Irish, Australian, Islamic, Judaic, and military studies.

**Atlas Books, BookMasters** distributes online and via wholesalers for many one-book publishers as well as some smaller publishers.

**Diamond Book Distributors** and the **Diamond Kids Group.** In business since 1982, this comic’s distributor now also distributes comics, graphic novels, Manga and Anime, as well as toys and other pop culture products to the book trade. Client publishers include Antarctic Press, Graphic-Sha Publishing, Avatar Press, ComicsOne, Toyspress, SQP, and IDW Publishing.

**Mascor Publishing** is a publishing company with all sorts of unusual titles. They will drop ship, but it is probably more profitable to just buy outright from them after you have made the sale. Almost all of their titles are always in stock.

**Bookworld** is one of the largest and best known distributors of books to small retail stores and website sellers.

**Publishers Group West** represents dozens of medium sized and specialty publishers.

**Consortium Book Sales & Distribution** represents over 70 publishers from the US, UK, and Australia.

**BG International** is a large distributor of children's books.
Bookstore Remainder Tables

Most large bookstores such as Barnes & Noble and even some of the independents have what is called a “remainder table.” That is the inside name for it—you won’t see the words Remainder Table on the table itself. The Remainder Table is usually a large table with a big SALE tag on it.

Bookstores have only so much room and there are new books coming out every day. So they often need to clear the shelves to make room. When they do this they put the slow moving books on a sale table. This is called the remainder table in the book trade.

In addition to their own books, the publishing companies and the distributors also need to clear out their warehouses and they will sometimes offer bookstores this excess stock (called remainders).

The remainder table contains both a lot of junk and a lot of great finds. Forget the hard cover editions of fiction novels. These are very hard to sell because once they hit the remainder table the paperback edition of the book is already out.

Look for the same type of books that you know will sell. These would include large photo books, books on sports, art, photography, transportation, the movies, and so on. Remainder books are somewhat like used books in that you can often find real bargains. I have purchased remainder books in the $5–$10 range that I could easily double or triple my money on.

One drawback to a remainder book is the remainder mark on the bottom edge.\(^\text{11}\) If you pick up a book from the remainder table, it will sometimes (but not always) have a felt-tip pen mark across the bottom edges of the pages. This is done so bookstores cannot return the books to the distributors and claim they were new stock that didn’t sell. This also identifies a book that a bookstore bought from a remainder distributor as opposed to one that came from their own shelves and put onto the sale table. If the book has any collectible value, a remainder mark will reduce it by 50% or more. Other than collectors, most buyers will not know what this mark is and you may get the occasional question from your buyers when they get the book, wanting to know why it was marked like this. When you sell a book with a remainder mark on it, you must state that clearly in your eBay, Half.com or Amazon listing.

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\(^\text{11}\) Both eBay and Amazon prohibit you from selling a remainder book as New. If it is a new book and has a remainder mark, then you must list it as “Used, Like new.”
Liquidation Book Dealers

The last source is the same source that bookstores use to buy from remainder dealers. You can buy remainders at the same price the bookstore is paying. The prices are very, very cheap—sometimes as little as 10% of the cover price. The problem is that you cannot select the books. They are usually sold by the pallet load which can be anywhere from 300 to 500 books depending on the size of the books. So you will get a mix of all kinds of books, many of them un-saleable.

The second problem is the cost. Liquidation dealers usually have minimums of $1000 or more. But if you specialize in a certain category of books you can often buy a pallet load of just that category. For example, you could buy a pallet load of just cookbooks. You couldn’t select the authors or titles, but you would be buying the books for about 10% of the cover price and you can usually double or triple your money on them.

Here are a few dealers in these books:

Abbeville Press, was established in 1977 and specializes in publishing quality books on art, architecture, photography, design, travel, lifestyle, and media.

The Deal Dude sells thousands of highly discounted books on almost every subject.


DVA at www.DVA.com (they also sell liquidation DVDs)

Book Pal at www.bookpal.com

Books liquidation at www.booksliquidation.com
Chapter 6

Describing and Grading Your Books

There are two types of customers you will be selling to: The reader and the collector. The reader, someone who buys a used book to read it, is mainly interested in the content and cares less about the condition. That doesn’t mean a reader cares nothing about condition—they do. They will rarely buy a book in really crappy condition, but the condition means less to them than it does to a collector.

Collectors on the other hand are very concerned about condition. The better the condition the higher price they will pay.

If you are going to sell books on eBay, Amazon and other online venues, you will be dealing with both types of customers, so it is important to learn not only the language of books but also how to judge and describe their condition. The problem with launching an auction on eBay or listing on Amazon is that you don’t really know whether your buyer is a reader or collector.

For example, the book I mentioned earlier on Shore Bird Carving was purchased by a collector. I thought it would be of interest to a wood carver or hobbyist, but it turned out that this book was fairly rare and was in demand by collectors. That is why it brought such a surprisingly high price. Near the end of the auction, there were three different bidders fighting it out for the book. I just sat there with my mouth open and watched the price climb minute by minute to over $400. The reason that it sold for so much was the condition. It was in Fine Condition and this type of book is very hard to find in Fine Condition because carvers used them in their workshops.

No matter how much experience you have, you just never know who will be bidding on your book and why. Therefore, you should get in the habit of describing a book in terms that both a collector and a reader will understand.

As for language, I have included links to a glossary of book terms in the appendix. I will refer to a few of them here and describe them as we go, but you should take some time to study the glossary of terms and become familiar with them.

The front and back covers of a hardback book are called boards. One of the first things a collector is concerned about is any damage to the boards, especially if a book has been bumped. This means the corner of the boards have been dinged or damaged due to careless handling. I recently received a copy of The Old Book Value Guide I had purchased on eBay. In the photo the corners looked perfect and the seller described them as fine. But when I received the book, two of the corners were dinged. No the seller didn’t lie to me—he just shipped the book in a padded envelop with no protection.
for the corners. After going through the US postal system two of the corners became bumped.

The Spine is the backbone, or back, of the book where the title (if present) is displayed when it is standing upright on a shelf. A book’s spine should always be straight and the binding (the material used as a protective cover for a book (e.g.: leather, cloth, paper) should be intact. Any stains, twisting, dents (dings in the book trade) or other damage to the spine of the binding should be accurately described.

The other important item is the cover. It is called the cover or wrap if it’s a paperback book and a dust jacket if it’s a hardback book. If you are selling a paperback book, the front and back covers should not have any tears, creases, stains or other damage. If it does, you should accurately describe it.

Most, but not all, hardback books printed after 1940 have a dust jacket. The condition of the jacket is one of the most important factors to a collector. A perfect dust jacket has no tears, dings, creases or stains. If there is any damage to a dust jacket be sure and reveal this. Some minor damage is acceptable and the older the book the more acceptable it is. 30 to 40-year-old books with perfect dust jackets are very rare. The most important thing you have to do is accurately describe the condition.

One thing you must always look for on a dust jacket is to see if the price was clipped off. This is often done when a book is given as a gift and it detracts from the value. Most booksellers describe the condition of the book and the dust jacket separately. If you are describing a book and the dust jacket has been price clipped, be sure and reveal that information in the description.

**Standard Condition Descriptions**

The Independent Online Book Sellers Association (IOBA) has created standard definitions that have become widely accepted in the industry and by collectors to be used when describing a book.

The terms they define include As New, Mint, Near Fine, Very Good, Good, Fair and a few others. I cannot reproduce the terms here because they are copyrighted. You can read (and print) the definitions on their website for free at: [www.ioba.org/desc.html](http://www.ioba.org/desc.html).

The IOBA is a non-profit membership organization. If you are a new bookseller in your first year in business, you can join for $30 a year. After that you can join as a full voting member for $50.

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12 My local used bookstore has two copies of first editions of John Steinbeck’s Of Mice and Men. One has a dust jacket in pretty good condition, the other one does not have a dust jacket. The one with the dust jacket is priced $160 more than the one without.
member for $60 year. This gives you access to tons of resources and educational materials, as well as the ability to network and get help from other sellers.

If you bought this book because you occasionally sell a few books and want to make a little more money doing it, then you may not want to bother joining. But if you are serious about this business (I define that as selling more than a dozen books a week) then I strongly recommend you pony up the few bucks to join the IOBA as it will pay dividends and the knowledge you gain will add money to your bottom line.

One of the best benefits of IOBA membership is the right to say you are a member, that you adhere to their ethical standards and you can display the IOBA seal in your auctions and other online listings. On eBay, make sure it’s not a link that would take someone off the eBay site. An IOBA seal on eBay gives buyers confidence in you.

In addition to the IOBA, Amazon.com, the largest seller of books online, has its own descriptions. Since I also sell on Amazon, I can reproduce their descriptions here:

**Amazon Guidelines for New and Used Books**

Items priced at or above the list price (MSRP) or $10, whichever is greater, are eligible for Collectible designation. Items priced below this may be listed under Used or New, but will not be eligible for Collectible designation. *(In other words you can’t describe a book as “collectible” if you list it for less than 10 bucks).*

These additional guidelines, although not mandatory, may be used to determine whether to list a book as Collectible. To be considered collectible, books should be unique in a way that increases value for a collector, for example:

- First edition and first printing, signed, inscribed, or scarce
- Not ex-library, a remainder, or a book club edition

Condition terms include:

**New:** Just like it sounds. A brand-new, unused, unread copy in perfect condition. (No remainder marks)

**Like New:** An apparently unread copy in perfect condition. Dust cover is intact; pages are clean and are not marred by notes or folds of any kind. Suitable for presenting as a gift. May contain a remainder mark.

**Very Good:** A copy that has been read, but remains in excellent condition. Pages are intact and are not marred by notes or highlighting. The spine remains undamaged.

**Good:** A copy that has been read, but remains in clean condition. All pages are intact, and the cover is intact (including dust cover, if applicable).
The spine may show signs of wear. Pages can include limited notes and highlighting, and the copy can include "From the library of ______" labels.

**Acceptable:** A readable copy. All pages are intact, and the cover is intact (the dust cover may be missing). Pages can include considerable notes--in pen or highlighter--but the notes cannot obscure the text.

**Unacceptable:** Moldy, badly stained, or unclean copies are not acceptable, nor are copies with missing pages or obscured text. Books that are distributed for promotional use only are prohibited. This includes advance reading copies (ARCs) and uncorrected proof copies.

Amazon’s descriptions are easier to read and understand by the layman, but are not as complete as collectors like. If you are using Amazon’s descriptions, you should say so. They are fine for 80% of the books you will probably sell, but if you come across anything expensive or obviously collectible, you will want to use—and state you are using—the IOBA condition descriptions.

Whichever system you use, be sure to describe your books in an accurate manner. An accurate product description increases buyer satisfaction, helps sellers build a loyal customer base, and ensures positive feedback ratings. If you describe a book as *fine* and the buyer sees it as only *good*, you risk getting a negative feedback on both eBay and Amazon. So if I am ever in doubt I will use the more conservative description.

Should a book have an obvious cosmetic flaw or contain a "remainder" marking you should always state this clearly.

One of the big differences between Amazon and the IOBA is that IOBA descriptions cover the book and the jacket separately. In other words, under IOBA a book could be *Very Good* while the dust jacket is only *Good*. Under Amazon’s guidelines the book and the jacket are considered together.

On the following page is a list of flaws you should always disclose. I have reproduced this list on its own page so you can print it out and use it as a checklist. When you start to buy books, take this list with you and use it when buying books and it will keep you from overpaying or buying books that could be hard to sell.
Book Flaws That Should Always Be Disclosed in Your Description

- Co-Branded edition (for example a book reprinted by a corporation as a promotion)
- Any Book Club edition (These are very hard to sell and I wouldn’t waste your time with them)
- Ex-Libras (Ex-library book. This will usually have the library name stamped on it or there will be a lending card pocket glued in the front. These are lending library discards as opposed to book purchased at a library sale)
- Personalized bookplates or embossed stamps inside the front cover. (This can reduce an otherwise Like New book to just Good)
- Books distributed prior to publications such as promotion copies, advanced reading copies or uncorrected proof copies
- Inscriptions (such as a gift inscription)
- Any labels, stamps or stickers
- Tears (pages or the jacket)
- Clipped dust jacket (price clipped from the inside corner of the jacket)
- Stains
- Weakness, twisting or damage to the binding including any loose pages
- Any handwriting, highlighting, notes or other marks on the pages or edges. (Pencil marks are okay as they can be erased)
- Remainder marks
- Musty odor, dampness or mildew (NEVER buy a book in this condition)
- Foxing (this is a light brown or sometimes reddish coloring of the pages from age and exposure to sunlight)
- Spine cracks or creases on paperbacks (caused by opening the book too wide)
- Anything else that would detract from the value or rate the book as less than Like New, Near Fine, or Near Mint

Lastly, there has been a change in Amazon’s regulations since the first edition of this book went to print. Until recently anyone could sell a “collector edition” or a collectible

13 An exception to this could be a copy with the original author’s notes if it is a famous author.
book on Amazon. However, late last year Amazon changed their policy so that now only experienced sellers can list collectible books on Amazon. So this means that you will have to sell any collectible books on Abe Books or eBay until you get some experience on Amazon.com. Amazon does not say what it takes to be allowed to sell collectible books, but once you have sold a few hundred books, just email Amazon and ask for permission. As long as your account is in good standing and your feedback is good (over 97%) you will usually be accepted.
Chapter 7

Cataloging, Storing & Shipping Your Books

I don’t know how large a dealer you plan to become. If this is just a small hobby business designed to make a few extra hundred dollars a month, then storing and cataloging your books is not a big issue because you won’t have that many of them. However, if you plan to grow your business where you have more than 200 or 300 books, you will want to be very organized and have a system for keeping track of your books.

Where Will I Put All of These Books?

Let’s look at storage first. Books should be stored on a bookshelf in a vertical (upright) position. There is one drawback to the book business. Books take up space and they have to be organized so you can find them. So you will have to give some thought to storage—and by that I mean bookshelves. You do not want to store your books in boxes. It can damage the books and they are difficult to find when you need one.

Now don’t rush out to Home Depot and spend $500 on shelving. The whole point of this exercise is to start small with a small investment and grow your business as you learn. But you will need to decide how many books you are going to start with, where you will put them and then put in a plan for growth.

For now, let us say that you decided to invest $200 in your initial inventory. Now that you know how and where to buy books, this will get you between 100 and 200 books. So at a minimum, you will need shelving for that many books to get started. As a rule of thumb, each linear foot of shelving will hold 10 hardback books or 12-14 paperback books. This does vary a bit, but over time you will find this rule to work out pretty well. So if you are going to buy a mixture of hard and soft cover books, and you use the average of 11 that means you will need roughly 9 linear feet of shelving to hold 100 books. (If you are buying large art books or coffee table editions, you will need about 20% more).

Bookshelves are one of those items that you can always find used. Pictured left is a photo of a bookshelf that I bought from my local thrift shop for $25. It is six feet wide and has six shelves including some wide ones at the bottom for oversize books. It will hold about 60 books per shelf or a total of 360 books. So you actually can store a lot of books in a fairly small area. One seller I know works out of a very small one-bedroom apartment. She specializes in books about arts and crafts. By keeping everything very organized she is able to store over 800 books and typically sells about 30 to
40 books a week at prices between $20 and $75 each.

Be careful where you store your books. Moisture and mildew is the biggest enemy of books. Unless you live in a very dry location like the Southwest, never store your books in a garage or basement, as these are too damp. Also don’t store your books where they get direct sunlight every day. If your bookcase faces a window with direct sunlight you will want to pull the blinds or drapes because it doesn’t take more than a couple of weeks of direct sunlight to fade the color on dust jackets. Some dealers actually drape a cloth over the bookcase to keep off both sunlight and dust, but do not do this if you live in a humid environment as it traps the moisture under the cloth.

**Organizing Your Inventory**

Whenever you sell a book you need to find it. This means you need some type of system for organizing your books. If you have less than 1000 books, you can do this manually just by filing them in proper order on your bookshelf. Fiction books are always filed by author. Non-fiction books are usually grouped by subject and filed by title within the subject grouping.

Since we are dealing mostly with non-fiction, you will want to set up your books into broad categories such as transportation, sports, arts, history, military, science, and so on. Then you just divide each category by subject. For example, in sports you would have baseball, basketball, football, etc. In Transportation you would have boats, planes, cars, motorcycles, trains, spaceships, and so on. Then within each subject just file your books by title. Now if you wake up tomorrow morning and see that your book on the History of The Superbowl sold on eBay, you would just go to the sports section and look under football. Assuming you only have a half a dozen or so books on football it would be pretty easy to find.

This book is aimed at beginners. I don’t think someone starting out should invest in more than 500 books until they really know what they are doing and unless and until they are doing it pretty much full time.

If you grow to that level, then you may want to invest in software to catalog your books. There are several low cost and even some free shareware programs on the market. With these systems you just enter the title (or in some cases the ISBN number) and then put a location where you keep the book, such as B1-2. That would mean bookcase Number 1 on shelf number 2. Some of the better software programs also help you run your business by letting you enter a purchase price and a sales price and the date of each. Then you can pull reports at the end of each month to see what sold and how much money you made.

A fairly new company that has a great inventory solution is the Optima Inventory control system at Bookstores.com. Optima is a fully-loaded marketplace seller software
suite designed to make selling online across multiple platforms easier by managing and maintaining your inventory in one location. Optima features channel automation and is integrated with many popular marketplaces such as Amazon.com, Abe Books, Valor Books, and others. Their software also features unique price automation tools that raises and lowers your prices based on the rules that you create, helping you sell your books at higher prices.

Later we are going to talk about AbeBooks.com, a website where you can sell your books. Once you sign up with Abe Books, they have a free software program you can use that is excellent.

Again you have to decide at what point you want or need to automate and start a database. But if you plan to grow a large full-time business, then you will want to start sooner rather than later as it is much easier to catalog books as you go along than all of a sudden make the decision to automate and now you have to enter 1,000 books into your database.

We list several bookseller software programs in the appendix.

**Protecting Your Books**

You should always protect your expensive books with protective Mylar jacket covers. This is not necessary for every book, but people who purchase expensive books (over $50) really expect them. Placing your books in Mylar covers will protect them and buyers who receive books that are protected this way will be more likely to leave you positive feedback. See the appendix for Mylar book cover suppliers.

![Mylar Book Covers](image)

**Shipping Your Books**

Be careful shipping books in corrugated or bubble-pak envelopes as they will often arrive damaged. These are ok for inexpensive paperbacks, but if you are selling a book for $20 or more, you want to make sure it arrives safe and undamaged. There are
plenty of companies that sell boxes and packing materials, but a company called Uline carries a line of boxes specifically sized for books.

I especially like the folded corrugated mailers like the ones pictured to the left.

These come in different sizes and you can adjust them for different sized books. Just be sure to place clean newsprint or bubble-pak in the empty space so the books don’t bounce around loose inside the box. Don’t use old newspapers to pack books because the black ink can rub off onto the books.

Another company that Karen and I use for supplies is Label Universe.

**Automate Your Postage and Labeling**

If you are selling more than 10 to 15 books a week, you will want to automate the mailing process for two reasons: One is just to save time and the other is so you don’t have to stand in line at the post office every day. We use a system from Stamps.com that connects with the post office. We just enter the weight, address, type of shipping (media mail, first class priority, etc.) and Stamps.com gives us a bar code that contains the shipping rate, a delivery confirmation number, and prints out the label. With the postage entered online like this, you can now just drive up to the back door of your post office and drop your books off. You don’t have to stand in line at the counter.

Stamps.com does charge a small monthly fee. I have a deal for my readers with Stamps.com whereby you get a free scale, postage supplies and $40 worth of free postage. Just use this link to get the special offer— www.stamps.com/skipmcgrath.

You just put the packaged book on the scale, copy paste the address from your PayPal or credit card notification, click on the shipping method, and Stamps.com will create the label and enter the delivery confirmation info into the USPS system.

Now here is the neat part. You can add a small handling charge to the postage to cover the cost of your box and materials. Stamps.com has a feature called Stealth Postage. When you select this feature, the postage is encoded in a bar code on the label and the buyer does not see the actual postage cost. So, for example, if the postage was $2.20, you could charge $2.90, which would cover the cost of your box.

Two years ago eBay rolled out the first major change to its feedback system in ten years. Under the new system, in addition to being able to leave a feedback comment, buyers can rate sellers on shipping and postage cost with a star system with 5 stars being the best and 1 the worst. If a buyer pays $3.25 for shipping and sees $2.25 on the
label they will think you are trying to make a profit off of the shipping and might ding you with a low star rating.

Buyers never consider the cost of boxes and packing materials although as you will find out this is one of your major cost centers. The other aspect of the new feedback system is that sellers can only leave positive feedback for buyers, so there is no longer any way to control or negotiate feedback that buyers leave for you. Most sellers hate the new system, but we are stuck with it so all you can do is accept it, adjust and move on.

There is another new rule that took effect in 2012. If you are a Top Rated Seller, then you are required to offer 1-day handling and ship the item and enter the tracking information for 90% of your sales within 1 business day. When you use Stamps.com you get tracking information even before you go to the post office, so you can enter it right away on eBay and ship the next day.

Getting a high star (DSR) rating is very important because eBay gives you fee discounts based on your star rating once you become a Top Rated Seller. eBay also uses your star rating to rank your results in eBay’s search engine. If you have a DSR score of 4.8 and another seller with a score of 4.2 is selling the same book as you are, your book will be listed first in the search results even if the other book is cheaper or the seller has a higher feedback number than you do. So for both reasons of lowering your fees and coming up well in the search engine it is very important that you maintain a high DSR score and earn your Top Rated Seller designation to get the fee discounts and better placement. The way to do this is to ship quickly, don’t try and make a profit on shipping, be very liberal with your returns policy and communicate quickly with buyers in a friendly manner.

Good feedback on Amazon is also important as Amazon will often give the buy box to the sellers with better account metrics.
Chapter 8

Pricing Your Books for Sale

How do I know how much to ask for a book? Unless you have a very rare or unusual book, this is pretty easy information to find. On eBay you can simply enter the title into the search box. When the books come up, first click on Advanced Search, then look for the button that says Completed listings. This will show you what the book has actually sold for as opposed to what people are asking or currently bidding.

Here is an example:

![Ebay listings example]

The prices in red are ended listings of books that did not sell. The prices in green are books that sold at that price.

On Amazon just enter the title or the ISBN number and you will see what Amazon is asking for a book as well as a listing of the price range that other sellers who are selling on Amazon are asking for new and used copies.

![Amazon listing example]

Buy new: $49.95  $32.97  29 Used & new from $23.25

Get it by Tuesday, Jan 10 if you order in the next 25 hours and choose one-day shipping.

54
You can see that Amazon is selling the book new for $32.97, but other sellers are offering it for as low as $23.25. You just click on the 29 Used & new link and it will list all 29 books, their condition, and who is selling them.

I live in a town on the water where there is a lot of boating. I have personally bought over 20 copies of the book in the image above over the years for between $1 and $5 at garage sales and thrift shops. It is a perennial best seller. I usually get around $25 to $30 for one in good condition.

After Amazon.com and eBay's half.com, the largest online market for books is Abe Books. Just go to the Abe Books website (Note: Abe Books operates as an independent website venue, but it was purchased by Amazon in 2014) and enter the author and title to see a listing of the books for sale. Abe probably has twice as many used books as Amazon and is a better place to find little known or unusual titles. But because of this it can also take a long time to sell a book on Abe because there are so many copies listed. However, if you find a truly rare book, you can often get a higher price on Abe than on eBay or Amazon.com.

I honestly can't tell you which book to sell where. It just takes experience. I suggest you start out with eBay, and then try half.com, then Amazon, and Abe Books last. Or if you are doing this part-time and just don't have the time to learn the ins and outs of all the venues, just stick with eBay and Amazon. But even if you don't sell on Abe, it is a great place to research prices.

You can sort listings on Abe Books by price and location. I like to sort by price, highest first then go down the list in price until I find a book in similar condition to the one I am selling. Then I price about 5% or 10% under the lowest one in my condition if I want a quick sale.

Here is an Abe Books listing for a book I sold recently about clipper ships:
I paid $12 for my copy at an estate sale, and sold my copy on eBay at my Buy-It-Now price of $120. It sold within 2 days. If I wanted to wait a while I could have probably gotten closer to $150 on Abe Books.

One problem with Abe Books is the sheer volume of books they have for sale. There were over 180 copies of this book available on Abe, but only two on eBay. So even though Abe is a much larger market, I was able to sell it much faster on eBay. Yes—I got a little less money but, as you will see below, you can make far more money by turning your inventory over often than by holding out for higher prices.

**Managing Your Inventory**

The more often you can turn your inventory over the more money you will make. This is a highly simplified example, but you will get the point. Let’s assume for a moment that the average selling price (ASP) of all of your books was $20 each and your average cost was $2 each, and you sell 20 per week. At this rate you sell all of the books in your stock (200) every 10 weeks. This means that you would make $18 per book x 200 = $3600 every 10 weeks or ($3600 x 5.2) $18,720 per year. But if you lower your prices and sell your books faster you can make much more money. For example, if you lowered your ASP to $15 and you sold all of your books in 6 weeks instead of 10 weeks, you would make $13 per book but your annual income would be $22,516. That's $3,796 more profit.

Now, admittedly that is a very simple example and a bit unrealistic as you will not turn 100% of your inventory over that fast and your average selling price may be much higher or lower, but it does illustrate the point.

As an online seller you have an advantage. Many of the big booksellers on Amazon and Abe Books (and even on eBay) are actually bookstores that also sell on line. These stores have employees, rent, insurance and other fixed costs they have to cover so they cannot afford to discount their books. The typical used bookstore will have somewhere between 10,000 and 30,000 or even more books in stock. On any given day they have a lot of money tied up in inventory. As an online seller you don’t want to do that. You want to keep you inventory small and keep it moving.

This is why when I price a book I look for the ASP of a book in similar condition and price it about 10% less. This means I make less on a book, but I usually sell the book a lot faster than other sellers and turn my inventory over more often.

As I pointed out in Chapter 3, you will acquire some books that just won’t sell. Here is how I handle that. When I get a new book I first list it on eBay at 10% under what I think its value is. For example, if I have seen this book selling elsewhere for $40, I will list the starting price at $36.
If it doesn’t sell the first time, I relist it once at the same price (you get one relisting credit with eBay if an item doesn’t sell but does sell the second time). If it still doesn’t sell I will lower the price a bit more and put it in my eBay store (store listing fees are much lower than auctions). If it doesn’t sell within 30 days, I might try it on Amazon. If it doesn’t sell within 30 days, I really lower the price—perhaps as low as $20. I will keep knocking 10% off of the price until I get close to my cost. At that point, I will donate it to the library or thrift shop for the tax deduction.

Money tied up in books sitting on your bookshelves for months is not earning you a return. Old, tired inventory just gathers dust. I would rather put that money back into a book they will sell rather than just let a book sit on my bookshelf taking up space and not earning money.

An exception to this rule is when I acquire a really valuable book. The neat thing about this business is that you will often find books that you can buy for just a few dollars that are worth much, much more than you paid for them. When I get a book like this I will usually put it up on eBay with a low starting price in a Reserve Price Auction. I will usually set my reserve about 20% below the book’s estimated value and let the bidders take it up from there. If it doesn’t sell right away, I will keep trying as I know it is a valuable book and I will eventually make my money on it.
Chapter 9

Specialize for Success

This is another fairly short chapter—but an important one. You may or may not want to specialize in one genre of books. Personally, I wouldn’t do this at first. I think it is important to just get started in the business, learn the ropes and make some profit that you can reinvest in your business.

But, once you learn how to buy books and learn what books sell the best, you may want to give some thought to developing a niche strategy. There are different levels of specialization. For example, if you are going to only sell non-fiction books as this book suggests that is one level of specialty. If you were to move into one of the broad categories of non-fiction books such as specializing in how-to books, or a broad category like sports or transportation, that becomes another level of specialization. Some book dealers take it further. I have seen book dealers who specialize in topics like new age, biological sciences, military history, ethnic cookbooks, and so on. One small dealer specializes in books on the Civil War. He does over $300,000 a year in sales. All of these are viable markets.

There are several advantages to developing a specialty or a niche market:

- People with specific interests like to buy from dealers who specialize in their area. If you have a specialty you will tend to attract repeat customers. You can sell to these customers from a website so you are not paying fees to eBay or Amazon.

- Customers who buy books on a specific subject tend to buy lots of books on that subject. This provides opportunities for up selling and cross selling.

- As you become knowledgeable in a specific area you will rapidly learn values and pricing. This will make you a better buyer.

- Your knowledge of a specific topic will make you a better seller because you can share that knowledge in your sales copy.

- Besides just selling on eBay and Amazon, you can also set up a website and sell your books directly.

There are two disadvantages of specializing. The first is that you are targeting a smaller market. This can limit your sales unless you pick a market that is large enough to support a viable business. Becoming too specialized could cap the size of your business. The other disadvantage is that the universe of books you can buy is limited. Specializing in a specific niche means that you will probably need to go outside your local area to source books unless you live in or near a very large city.
Considering all of these points I would still vote to become at least somewhat specialized. Just be sure to pick a niche that is large enough to support your business.

For example, you can sell a general line of non-fiction books, but also develop a niche specialty such as Gluten Free Cookbooks.

Remember you can always become more specialized later. For example, if you started out specializing in books about boating you would have no trouble finding books to sell and the market is large enough to support your business. But if you were to specialize in one aspect of boating such as sailboat racing, your market would be much more limited and you would have to work much harder to find books to sell.
Section II

Selling Your Books on eBay, Amazon and the Internet

In the first section we covered what kind of books to buy and sell, where to find them, how to ship them and learned about some of the research tools available.

In this section you will learn how to sell your books. We are going to cover eBay and Amazon in detail, as well as Half.com and Abe Books to a lesser extent. We will also cover the topic of setting up your own website so you can sell books directly to your customers without paying fees to Amazon or eBay.
Chapter 10

Selling Your Books on eBay

So far we have discussed three venues to sell your books: eBay (including eBay owned half.com), Amazon, and Abe Books. We will cover eBay in this chapter, and Half.com and Amazon in the next. We will also give you an introduction to Abe Books, but this is probably not a site you can or should use until and unless you have a very large inventory.

As I pointed out in the introduction, this is not a basic *How to Sell on eBay* book. We assume you already know the basics of registering an account and selling on eBay. If not, there are plenty of good books on eBay selling, some of them even written by me. My books are available on Amazon (Just type Skip McGrath into the Amazon search bar) or visit my website, www.skipmcgrath.com.

The main consideration for selling on eBay is building up your feedback and seller reputation. eBay now has a system for ranking sellers in addition to the old feedback system that has been in place since the beginning. The newer system is called Detailed Seller Ratings (or DSRs). The buyer rates the seller on their performance in several categories using a star system of 1 to 5 stars.

Here is what it looks like in my seller feedback profile:

![Feedback profile screenshot](image)
As you can see, both our feedback score and our Detailed Seller Ratings are pretty good. We have been doing this for 17 years and frankly we work at that pretty hard. But it pays off. I sell a lot of things on eBay where I have competition that undersells me, yet I continue to sell at my slightly higher prices. People will often buy from me even though they might pay a higher price because they feel safe doing so.

If you score well on your DSRs, two things happen: One is that your listings will come up higher in the search results than other sellers with poorer scores. The other is that (if you achieve PowerSeller status) you will earn fee rebates from eBay. Keep all four of your DSR scores above 4.9 for 30 days and you get a 20% fee rebate; 4.8 for 30 days and you get a 15% rebate on your Final Value Fees at the end of the month. If you keep them above 4.6 you still get a 5% rebate. You can also achieve Top Rated Seller Status, which will also help your listings come up higher in search results.

**Listing your Books**

Selling books on eBay is quite simple. You don’t even need to take a photo unless the book is very old.

You simply enter the ISBN number of the book you want to sell into eBay’s *sell your item* form and eBay plugs in the publisher’s photo and a description of the book. Then you add your information such as condition, your review of the book or any other comments. (Note: Many sellers just describe the condition of the book, but I always take a moment to write a few comments about it and I find this helps my sales.)

Although eBay does serve up the publisher’s photo of a book, if a book is valuable (something that will sell for $25 or more) then I will usually take a couple photos of it—front and back. When someone buys an expensive book, they usually want to see an actual photo of what they are buying.*

One thing about selling books is that a lot of buyers are impatient. Media mail is the cheapest way to ship books, but I always offer a Priority Mail option. Even though it will cost up to $7 or $8 more, almost 25% of my book buyers opt for the more expensive service. Sometimes just offering the faster service as an option will earn a sale that another seller could have had if they also offered faster shipping. (Later I will show you a way to offer fast shipping more cheaply.)

**Using the eBay Listing Tool**

I'm assuming you have sold on eBay before, so I'm not going to walk you through the entire *Sell Your Item* form. But what I will show you are the few options that are available to you when selling books. First, let's look at a newer book with an ISBN number. These are arguably the easiest items to list on eBay.
When you click “sell” from the homepage you are instructed to enter the UPC, ISBN, VIN, Part number, or a keyword title for your item. This enables eBay to find the item in their catalog if it is there. For booksellers, this makes listing items super-easy. Just enter the ISBN number here and usually eBay will be able to find the item and provide the item details and synopsis for you. If you don’t have the ISBN, just enter the title here.

On the next page it will suggest an item if it is in the eBay catalog. If the item isn’t a correct match. Click “continue with your listing.” If it is the correct item, click “sell yours” and eBay will pretty much do the rest of the work for you.

If you're unsure if it is the correct book, click *Show details* to see more information about the book. Most of the time you'll be able to identify the right one from the ISBN, title, and the thumbnail photograph.
On the next screen you can see extra information about the book provided by eBay. This often includes the publisher's synopsis about the book. You can choose whether or not to include this by checking or un-checking the box marked *Include the product information in your listing*. To see all the information they will add click *see details* below the thumbnail image.

If you used the ISBN number, the *item specifics* information will also be completed for you. All you will need to do is select the condition (used or new) and if there are any special attributes (signed or 1st edition) you select the appropriate box.

You still need to write a good description, and this is where you will enter the actual condition of the book using the grading standards we talked about earlier. From here on, it's the standard Sell Your Item form that you're used to seeing for all other items.

If your book is very old and doesn't have an ISBN number, you can skip the ISBN search feature and enter the information directly on the *Sell Your Item* form. You won't have
the pre-filled information, so make sure you complete all of the *item specifics* boxes (including the subject category) to make sure your book comes up in searches.

It's a little more work not using the product catalog search, and you will need to take your own photo of the item as a stock picture will not be provided, but otherwise it's pretty much the same.

**eBay Fees**

eBay has two selling formats: Auction and Fixed Price. eBay recently changed their fee schedule and it was a good deal for book sellers. Here are the new eBay auction insertion fees:

Your first 50 single-quantity auction-style listings in a calendar month won’t be charged an insertion fee.

If your listing is eligible for a $0.00 insertion fee, your insertion fee will appear as "Free" in the listing form. If you're relisting an item, the relist is eligible for $0.00 insertion fees under the same guidelines as a new listing (as long as it's an auction-style listing in an eligible category, and falls within the limit of 50 listings in a calendar
month. All listings (including relisted and canceled listings) count toward the 50 listings limit.

Only auction-style listings are eligible. All other fees, including listing upgrade fees (such as bold or listing in two categories) and final value fees, still apply.

The final value fee for all listings is 10% percent—quite a bit lower than Amazon’s 15%. (Of course, you will still have the additional PayPal fee of about 2.9%)

Now, to complicate matters further, if you sell at fixed price, eBay has a different fee schedule for eBay store subscribers. All eBay store sales are fixed price, so depending on your volume, and what you sell, you may want to look at this.

There are three levels of eBay store subscription:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscription fees</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Store type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anchor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Basic store is fine for most sellers, but if you get to the point where you are listing over 200 books per month in your eBay store then as you will see below you may want to move up to a Premium Store subscription. Why is that you ask?

Well as I mentioned above, eBay has different fees for store subscribers. The listing fee for a basic store is only 20-cents versus 50-cents for a standard fixed price listing. At the Premium level, the listing fee drops to just 10-cents and down to 5-cents for Anchor stores. Those fees are for a 30-day listing.

So obviously you can save money on listing fees by having a store subscription. Since the final value fees are the same, it works out that if you list more than 40 books per month, it will be cheaper to get an eBay store subscription. And once you go over 200 books you will save money by having a Premium store.

eBay store listings come up the same as traditional fixed price listings in search so that is a neutral factor.

We should note that eBay sets maximum shipping rates for books and all other media products.

When selling in these categories, you have two options:
- Offer at least one shipping option where the total shipping cost (shipping + handling) is less than or equal to this maximum. You can also offer other options above these maximums for expedited or international shipping.

- Use calculated shipping.

Currently eBay’s maximum flat-rate shipping charge for all books is $4. In the non-fiction category you often get large coffee-table sized books that are very heavy and you will lose a little on shipping these, so you may want to offer calculated shipping on any large or heavy book.
Chapter 11

Selling on Half.com

Half.com is a great site for selling certain types of books. Half.com was purchased by eBay back in 2002. You will need to register on Half.com even if you are already a registered eBay seller. However, if you use the same User ID and password, your feedback will be shared over both sites.

Selling on half.com has several advantages. First of all, you get 20 free listings per month. They take a commission, calculated as a percentage of the selling price of the item only. Half.com used to have their own fee schedule which was slightly better than eBay but now they charge the same fees as eBay does.

Unlike eBay, on Half.com you do not set the shipping price, they do. It is a fixed rate based on the type of item and the shipping service selected by the buyer (Media Mail or Expedited). Expedited shipping is considered to be delivery within 1-3 days (USPS Priority Mail, FedEx Home Delivery, or UPS Ground). You will need to use insurance and tracking because they will refund the buyer if an item is lost or damaged in the mail, and it’s your responsibility to claim the insurance back from the shipping company. (Note: no matter which carrier you use, you can save a ton of money on shipping insurance if you use a company that I do called ShipInsurance. Not only are they cheaper, they also pay claims in about ½ the time the carrier insurance takes.)

**Half.com Shipping Allowance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Type</th>
<th>Media Mail</th>
<th>Expedited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hardback book</strong></td>
<td>$3.99 / $2.49</td>
<td>$5.99 / $4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paperback book</td>
<td>$3.49 / $1.89</td>
<td>$5.49 / $4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiobook</td>
<td>$3.49 / $1.89</td>
<td>$5.49 / $3.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second number in each column is the extra allowance for each additional item that buyer purchases from you. So, if a buyer purchases two hardback books from you and wants media mail shipping, the shipping allowance would be $3.99 + $2.49 = $6.48.

If the buyer selects expedited shipping and the allowance isn't going to cover it, you still have to send it expedited. So make sure to calculate your shipping via both media...
mail and whichever expedited service you prefer before you list the item. This way, you can recover the extra shipping cost by including it in the list price.

When an item sells, you will get an email from Half.com with the order notification. You have 72 hours from then (excluding weekends and holidays) to ship the item. You can link through to PayPal to purchase the shipping label to get the reduced rates.

**When and How Do I Get Paid?**

Your buyers will pay Half.com directly, and they will pay you the selling price plus the shipping allowance. Half.com only pays by direct deposit into your checking account (i.e. no PayPal). Payments are calculated twice a month on the 15th and last day of each month. The actual payment for that period will be made into your checking account in 7 business days after the end of the period.

These fees may sound high, but remember there are no listing fees and no PayPal fees because you are being paid by direct deposit.

You can sell any type of book on Half.com so long as it has an ISBN, however the site is best known for text books and bargain books. I would not suggest selling any high-priced or collectible book on half.com as you can almost always get a better price on eBay or Amazon.

Half.com has a recommended pricing scale based on the best online price (not the recommended retail price) and the item:

- Like New: 50%
- Very Good: 45%
- Good: 40%
- Acceptable: 35%

Let's say you have a "like new" textbook with a cover price of $85, but it's available in new condition through Amazon for $70. Half.com would suggest you list it for $35. Now, there's nothing to prevent you from listing it higher, particularly if there's not much competition, but this is what Half.com recommends.

Here is a screenshot of some accounting textbooks for sale on Half.com. The most important thing about selling textbooks is making sure you have a recent edition and the book contains a minimum of highlighting and notes written in the book. Students don’t like highlighting because it can be confusing when they go to highlight sections themselves.
The other use for half.com is a place to park slow-moving inventory. It's very quick and easy to list on Half.com (much more so than eBay) and they even have a bulk-lister if you have lots of books to sell.

Listing Your Books on Half.com

From the homepage, click Sell Your Stuff (in the top orange bar). Then select your category (we're using Books). If you only have one item, enter the ISBN number in the box and click Continue. If you have multiple items to list, click Multiple Item Listing and the next page will show multiple listing boxes rather than just one.

If you just list one item at a time, this is what the listing page will look like:
Note that you get the thumbnail image of the book to confirm this is the right book. You need to select the condition from the drop-down menu, plus you get two boxes—one for comments and other for an extended description.

The first 50-75 characters in the comments box will show on the main product page, so these are the critical words. Make sure to reiterate anything unique about this book versus every other book (is it 1st Edition, signed by the author, flawless condition, etc.) in these first few words. It will make all the difference.

If you're using the Multiple Listing Page, you will see:
Note, there are no thumbnail images or description box. You simply enter the ISBN, select the condition and write a short description (under 500 characters) about the item. There are 10 blocks per page, so you can bulk-list 10 items at a time.

Once you click Continue from either the individual listing or multiple item listing page, you will be prompted to sign in. If you are not already a registered Half.com seller, use your eBay User ID and password to save yourself some time (and have your feedback shared across both sites). You'll be prompted to add a credit card and checking account. The credit card is for identity verification. The checking account is so you can get paid!

When you first register, you will also need to enter your shipping from location (city/state) and decide if you are going to offer expedited shipping. This is a blanket preference and you can't select it for one item and not another. So if you mostly sell text books (where the expedited shipping cost isn't likely to get even close to the actual cost) I would suggest you don't offer this service. However, if you mainly sell smaller paperbacks, then it's probably worthwhile. You can always change this option in your My Account settings.

Now, for each book you listed, you'll see a box to enter the price. You'll also see pricing information showing the average selling price for the condition you selected, and also for all conditions. It also shows the current price range and number of items listed currently. This can really help you price your item accurately.
If you used the multiple listings page, be extra careful to check the information at the top of each box, showing the thumbnail image and the information about the book. If you typed the ISBN number wrong, you could be accidently listing the wrong book. If you do catch an error, click *make changes* to go back to the previous page.

Once you're sure that all of the times on the page are accurate, click *List Item* and you're done.

Listing on Half.com is very quick and painless. You can easily list 10 different books in less than 10 minutes. Plus, if you have multiple quantities of a book, simply enter the amount and the listing will run until there are no more available (you can update this in *My Account* if you sell one elsewhere).

If you go on vacation, or are unable to ship within the 72 hours allowed for another reason, you can put your inventory on "vacation hold." Go to *My Account*, click *Vacation Setting* (on the left sidebar), then click *Leave for Vacation*. When you want to bring your inventory back online, go back to the same place, but the button will now say *Return from Vacation*. 
Chapter 12

Selling on “The River”

The “River” is eBay slang for Amazon.com. People on the eBay message boards use the term ‘river’ when they are speaking about amazon.com so eBay will not automatically remove their posts. After a few years the slang term stuck and today many writers, bloggers and even newspaper articles refer to Amazon.com as “The River.”

Amazon.com got its start selling new books and those still make up a huge percentage of their sales. But, shortly after Amazon was founded, they started allowing booksellers to register on Amazon to offer used books for sale. Eventually Amazon also allowed the sale of new books by other sellers—seemingly competing with themselves.

When you search for a title on Amazon, they return the Amazon price (what you pay when you buy the book from Amazon) and the price that other sellers are offering the book for. Here is an example using one of my books:

As you can see, Amazon sells the book at the discounted price of $13.83. But below that is says More Buying Choices $5.55 used and new (65 offers) When you click on this link you will see listings from several other sellers selling new or used versions of the same book. You may wonder why Amazon does this as it seems they are competing with themselves. (Take a moment now and go onto Amazon.com and do this so you can see the offers.)

Well, Amazon charges these sellers quite high fees if the item sells: 15% of the listing price, 99 cents per transaction, plus a "closing fee" per item ($1.35 for books).

The cover price of this book is $21.95 but Amazon is selling it for $13.83. The volume wholesale price of this book is $8.78, so Amazon is making $5.05 when they sell a book. I have ignored shipping costs for this example. (Now you see why I prefer to sell self-published books. When I sell a copy of the book shown, as the author I make $1.40 on each book.)

If you sell the book for $13, Amazon makes 15% of the listing price ($1.95) plus $0.99 for the transaction fee, plus the $1.35 closing fee. That's a total of $4.29. That’s close to the amount they make by selling the item themselves but they don’t have to lay out
money first for inventory. So you can see why independent booksellers like you are very valuable to Amazon.

Let me insert a small aside here. Above I stated that Amazon charges 15% plus 99¢ per book. But Amazon also offers an option to become a Pro-Seller. If you become a Pro-Seller there is a monthly fee of $39.95, but the extra 99¢ fee is waived for Pro-sellers. So if you sell more than 40 books per month, then it makes sense to become a Pro-Seller. Also if you eventually want to sell in the Collectible category on Amazon, you must be a Pro-Seller.

In other sales they may make less, but remember Amazon does nothing for this sale except provide the web space for someone to list a book. All they do is collect the money and send your cut to you. The seller does all the work (listing, packing and shipping). And a lot of books are not discounted as much as this one. For many books, the used & new price is closer to the Amazon price.

Now let’s look at the seller’s perspective. If you bought the book at a garage sale for $1, and let’s say you sell it for $12, you make way more than Amazon does when they sell the book brand new—Your total cost is $4.15 (including the purchase cost and Amazon fees), which gives you a gross profit of $7.85. Amazon’s profit on a new book was $5.05.

Because two of the fees are flat rate, the more you can sell the item for, the better your margin. Here is a shot of a book I sold earlier this year.

I sold my copy for $39. I found it at a garage sale for $5. The Amazon fees were $8.19, which left me a gross profit of $25.81.

Here is another book I recently sold on the River:

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I sold my copy for $39. I found it at a garage sale for $5. The Amazon fees were $8.19, which left me a gross profit of $25.81.

Here is another book I recently sold on the River:
I bought this at a library sale for $2.50. I can’t remember the exact price but I seem to recall that I sold my copy on Amazon for about $30 (gross profit of $20.66).

If you want to learn how to sell on Amazon, I have two books. One is my complete training course, *The Complete Amazon Marketing System*. The other one is a shorter eBook called *eBay to Amazon*.

As you can see there are some nice profits to be made on the River. Listing books is very simple. Let’s take a look at how this works:

**Listing Books on Amazon.com**

There are two ways to list a book, either from the Amazon listing page for the same book, or from your account page. If you go from your Account page, click on *Sell Your Stuff* (in the Marketplace box on the right of the page). Most of the time though, you’ll use the existing listing page.

Click *Sell yours here* to get started.

Just like the Half.com listing, you select the condition, but here you get collectible conditions as well as the standard ones.

On Amazon you get 1000 characters for your comments about the item.

Click *Continue* when you're done.
Amazon gives you marketplace data just like Half.com on the pricing page. It shows you the price Amazon is selling the item for, as well as the prices for competing items in the Amazon Marketplace:
Here you also select your shipping options. Amazon gives you a flat-rate shipping credit. It shows you on this page how much it would be for each type of shipping. So make sure to adjust your price if the shipping credit doesn’t cover your costs.

After you click *Continue* you will be prompted to sign in and then register as a seller if you didn’t already do so. You’ll need to provide both credit card and checking account details. You’ll also have to provide a telephone number so you can receive an automated phone call to enter a pin number that will display on your screen. You should get the call immediately after clicking *Call me now*.

Once you’re done with your registration, it will take you right back to the final review page for your listing. Click *Submit Your Listing* when you’re ready. There is a 14-day waiting period before any money from your Amazon account can be disbursed into your checking account after you first register the account. However, once that is over, you can disburse any sales proceeds into your checking account as frequently as ever 24 hours if you wish.

Once you are registered as a seller you will have access to a page on Amazon called Seller Central. On Seller Central there is a link under the Inventory menu to Add a Product:

![Add a Product](image)

When you click on that link you get a page that looks like this:

![Find it on Amazon](image)

If you are selling a book (or CD or DVD), just type in the ISBN number (without the dashes) and item will come up.
All you do is click on the yellow “Sell Yours” button and the Amazon listing detail page will come up. You describe the condition, add any extra photos you have, set the price, click Finish, and your book will be for sale on Amazon within 15 minutes.

**Save Time and Increase Profits with Fulfillment By Amazon (FBA)**

I mentioned Fulfillment By Amazon (FBA) earlier in the book and I promised to tell you about it as this is the one service that can really kick your Amazon sales into high gear.

**FBA (Fulfillment by Amazon) Explained**

Entering its ninth year, FBA stands for *Fulfillment By Amazon* and it is Amazon’s version of a fulfillment company. Fulfillment companies have been around for a long time providing storage and shipping services for their clients’ products. But, what makes FBA different is that Amazon is also the marketplace for those items so they have an active interest in seeing the items sell and the customer receive the item promptly. Additionally, FBA items are eligible for Amazon’s shipping promotions including Free Super Saver Shipping and Amazon Prime. This is what makes FBA incredibly powerful.

Even if you don’t currently use FBA and even if you don’t ever want to use FBA, it is important to understand how the program works and how your competition is using FBA in their business.

**The Triple Win**

FBA can be described as a Triple Win.
1. **Higher prices, higher margins, higher payouts.** Since items sold through FBA are eligible for Free Super Saver Shipping and Amazon Prime, FBA sellers actually raise their prices to match their competitor’s total price (price + shipping). So even with the addition of FBA fees, the FBA seller still receives a higher net payout from their Amazon sale because of the higher sales price. For example, a seller who ships their own orders who sells an item for $20 with $5 shipping will show the same as an FBA seller selling the exact same item for $25. Actually, the FBA seller will show first because being in FBA is the tie breaker.

2. **Less work.** FBA sellers sell items 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Items ship all hours of the day or night including weekends. They ship whether the seller is at home or on vacation. Once an FBA seller prepares their items for the FBA warehouse and sends them to Amazon, they don’t have to do anything else. They can monitor inventory levels and adjust prices as needed from anywhere with an Internet connection. They don’t have to stock boxes, envelopes, packing materials, or shipping labels anymore. They also don’t wait around for their UPS driver or go to the post office every day.

3. **Happier Customers.** It is estimated that 40-50% of Amazon buyers have never bought from a third party merchant. Amazon customers want to buy from FBA sellers. They trust Amazon and they know that their items will ship quickly and if there is ever a problem, Amazon will help (including an extended return policy). When your items are shipped through FBA (either for Amazon orders or Basic Fulfillment orders) they will attract these types of Amazon buyers who are willing to pay more for the exact same item if it comes from Amazon or an FBA seller. They do this because they know they will get their item fast and that customer service will be top notch.

**Scalability Helps Small Sellers**

The competitive advantages that the big sellers have enjoyed for years have vanished overnight with the introduction of FBA. In the past, a new seller on Amazon could make some good money by selling items out of their garage in their spare time, but if they wanted to make a real income they would have to scale up and get more space to handle more inventory and hire employees to help with all of the orders. Now they may make more money but they have additional overhead costs. There are two things that have kept small sellers small—space and time limitations.

As a small seller, you only have so much space for product storage and you only have so much time to list, sell, and ship your orders. Ten orders a day can be fun. Twenty may get you excited. But can you fulfill 300 orders in a day—day after day? And shut down your entire business if you ever wanted to go on vacation?
With FBA, you can grow as big as you want. FBA removes the space and time limitations and allows you to compete on the same playing field as the big, established sellers on day one. There are no scalability restrictions with FBA. If you have access to products, you could sign up with FBA and ship them fifty thousand products in one day and be selling 500 items a day within the week. Manage your inventory properly and you could run an FBA empire from a studio apartment.

How Amazon Describes FBA

Amazon describes FBA this way:

“With this innovative service, you send inventory directly to Amazon where it is stored and managed in a secure, climate-controlled facility. When orders are received, Amazon will professionally pick, pack and ship the product directly to your customer.

Amazon.com processes millions of orders a year while consistently ranking as one of the most trusted and highest customer satisfaction rated e-commerce companies. To maintain this unique combination, we have developed one of the most advanced online order processing and fulfillment operations in the world. From the advanced web-to-warehouse, high-speed picking and sorting system to our complete shipping carrier integration, Amazon’s technology results in your customers getting what they ordered, when they ordered it.

Whether you're considering just a few items and shipments a week or millions of products and orders per year, you can put Amazon's expertise and experience to work for your business with Fulfillment by Amazon.

Put Amazon's Fulfillment Technology to Work for You.

You sell it, we ship it. Amazon has created one of the most advanced fulfillment networks in the world, and your business can now benefit from our expertise. With Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) you store your products in Amazon's fulfillment centers, and we directly pack, ship, and provide customer service for these products.

Enjoy these benefits when you use Fulfillment by Amazon.

Eligible for FREE Super Saver Shipping & Amazon Prime.

Customers love FREE Super Saver Shipping and Amazon Prime. FBA Listings on Amazon.com feature these delivery messages increasing
awareness of product eligibility for free shipping.

**Competitive Pricing**

Your FBA listings on Amazon.com are sorted by the item price without a shipping cost. Amazon assumes they will ship for free with FREE Super Saver Shipping or Prime, which gives you an edge when competing!

**Trusted Customer Service and Returns**

FBA listings are displayed with the "Fulfillment by Amazon" logo, so customers know that packing, delivery, customer service and returns are all handled by Amazon.

**Fulfill Orders from other Channels**

FBA can fulfill your orders from other sales channels from your inventory stored at an Amazon fulfillment center. You manage your inventory through a simple online user interface, and can direct us to return the inventory in our fulfillment centers at any time.”

**FBA Fees**

There are fees that are associated with FBA. These fees include:

- **Inbound Shipping Fee**—This is the cost of getting your items to the FBA warehouse. Amazon lets you use UPS partnered shipping so you get Amazon UPS rates, which you can probably imagine are the lowest in the world. A 50-pound box typically ships for around $9-$15 depending on how close you are to
your nearest fulfillment center. You can also arrange LTL shipments or choose your own shipper.

- **Amazon Commission**—The commission varies depending on the categories that you sell in (Books, movies and music are 15% plus a $1.35 variable selling fee)

- **Handling Fee (for non-media items)**—See chart

- **Pick & Pack Fee**—See chart

- **Weight Based Fee**—See chart

- **Storage Fee**—Storage fees are very low and the first 30 days are free. You can manage your FBA inventory levels and replenish your inventory as needed to keep 30 days-worth of sales in stock to prevent paying any FBA storage fees. Even if you do end up paying storage fees, you’ll find that they are very reasonable.

Go to this link to see more detail and complete explanation of Amazon FBA fees:

[www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html/?nodeId=201119410](http://www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html/?nodeId=201119410)

**Creating a Shipment**

Use this link to learn how to create your first shipment to Amazon:


**Pricing Your FBA Items**

As you can see, there are additional fees associate with FBA, but you will also sell your items for a higher price so in most cases you will actually receive a higher net payout per transaction even though you have additional transaction fees. This would seem impossible considering the fact that by using FBA you are also doing less work and a keeping your customers happier by providing faster shipping services than you could provide yourself. And, even with these high fees, you sell far more items in FBA than you do merchant fulfilling, so overall you still make more money.
The Down Side to FBA

Even with all the positive things that FBA allows sellers to do, there are some things to keep in mind when deciding if you are going to send all or some of your inventory to an FBA warehouse.

Return Policy

Amazon handles customer service for all FBA orders. Amazon is very conscientious about keeping their customers happy. They will allow a customer to return an item for any reason. This opens the door for abuse sometimes and there are instances where a customer takes advantage of this policy at the expense of your inventory.

If you find that you are receiving a higher rate of return on an item that is affecting your target margins, you will have to evaluate the item compatibility with FBA. You can raise your price to compensate or you can try to sell the item on other channels and ship your orders from your FBA inventory using Basic Fulfillment. You may even decide that the product is no longer a good match for FBA and you can request that Amazon return the products to you.

International Orders

Currently, Amazon will ship your books and media items internationally for you at no extra charge (customer pays shipping). If you sell items from other categories on Amazon, they may not be eligible for international shipping (through Amazon direct sales or Basic Fulfillment). I expect that Amazon will offer this service in the future.

Amazon as a Competitor

When selling on Amazon using FBA, you may enjoy a time of being the only FBA seller for an item. This is an ideal situation but it doesn’t always last. Other sellers can list their FBA inventory and start to drive the price down. Sometimes you may be selling an item that Amazon does not currently carry and have a type of exclusivity. In the event that Amazon starts to carry these products directly, they may be able to sell them at lower margins that you are comfortable with. In cases like this, you can try to sell your items on other channels and use Basic Fulfillment until you are out of inventory, or even request to have your inventory removed. Then re-evaluate the item considering your costs and profit margin goals.

Unfulfillable Inventory

If a customer returns an item, Amazon will determine if the item can be resold or not. If it can be resold, it will be added to your existing FBA inventory. If not, it will be marked as ‘unfulfillable’ and you will have to request that it be returned to you or destroyed. Best Practice is to remove your entire unfulfillable inventory once a month or so. You may find that items were damaged or that there was nothing wrong with
your items. Just reprocess them to your FBA account if they are still in sellable condition.

**Lost/Missing/Damaged Inventory**

Occasionally you may find that some of your inventory is missing. Sometimes they do lose it, and sometimes it just takes a long time to receive it. If Amazon loses or damages your inventory, they will compensate you for the items.

**Using FBA to Fulfill other Orders**

Remember I told you earlier I would show you a way to save on shipping and to get someone to do the work for you. Well here goes:

One of the coolest things about FBA is you can list your books on other venues such as eBay or Abe Books and, when the book sells you can log into your Amazon FBA inventory page and create a fulfillment order. When you do this Amazon will pack and ship the book for you and pass their low shipping rates on to you so you can be more competitive with your shipping rates on eBay.

There are even two companies that will create your fulfillment orders for you. One is called Joelister.com and the other is AutoMCF.com. (Note - JoeLister will also let you create eBay listings from your Amazon listings in less than one minute).

Both Joe Lister and AutoMCF will automatically fulfill the books and enter the tracking info into eBay for you. And best of all, when Amazon ships a book to your eBay customer you get Amazon’s low UPS shipping rates which means you will have no problem meeting eBay’s fixed shipping costs.
Chapter 13

Amazon or eBay?

The most frequent question I get from readers of this book is: “Skip— should I sell my books on eBay or on Amazon?” Unfortunately, there is no good answer to that question. After years of doing this I have just developed a feel for this and I don’t know how to explain it to you. The answer is that it takes some experience. I can give you some general guidelines—but they are rules of thumb and don’t always hold up.

In general, I tend to try collectible or expensive books on eBay first. I always seem to get higher price and the books sell faster. The other books I always list on eBay first are those that are highly specialized. And for some reason any “how-to” books tend to move faster on eBay as well.

But when I have general books on history, politics, art and business, they always tend to do better on Amazon. And in general (but not always), lower priced books (those under $15) tend to sell faster on Amazon.

The other factor is; do you use FBA? If you use FBA, then you will see your books sell faster on Amazon and you have the advantage that Amazon becomes your dropshipper so this saves you quite a bit of work. Before using FBA our Amazon sales were only 20% of our eBay sales for the same product. But now they are 80/20 so FBA really works for us. And we have the advantage of having Amazon fulfill our eBay sales for us so we are not packing and shipping to customers.

So back to the original question; Amazon or eBay? I wish there were a magic formula that you could just plug your book titles into and get the best answer, but there isn’t, so about all you can do is experiment.

Having said all this, if you use FBA as described in the previous chapter, why not list your books on both sites? The service that I mentioned, Joelister.com, quickly creates listings for your books and when a book sells it does three things. It creates the fulfillment order so Amazon ships the book; it then ends the eBay listing so you don’t have to worry about selling a book you no longer have; and lastly it automatically uploads your tracking info to eBay.
Chapter 14

Selling on AbeBooks.com

Abe Books at www.abebooks.com started life as the Advance Book Exchange and later shortened the name to Abe Books. It is the largest online bookstore for used and rare books. In addition to the huge U.S. site, Abe also runs several international sites. When you list a book on Abe Books, it is automatically listed on Abe Books UK, France, and Germany. You can list your books on the Australia and New Zealand site very easily.

Abe gives you a platform to sell your book, or Abe will also buy books from you, although they give you very little for them (more about this in a minute).

If you have at least 500 books to list on the site, you can open a bookstore. I am not going to cover all the details of how to open a store on Abe because the online help file is very extensive and pretty easy to follow.

You start by downloading Abe Books inventory management program called Home Base. Even if you don’t want to sell on Abe, Home Base is a great program to organize and catalog your books.
Abe charges a $25 per month subscription fee, plus 8% sales charge, and 5% if they process the credit card transaction for you. But, other than the monthly subscription fee there are no listing fees.

One of the downsides to Abe Books is just the sheer volume of books on the site. Almost any book you list will have tons of competition. Also, Abe seems to work best for expensive collectible books and literature.

In general, I wouldn’t bother with Abe Books until you have grown your business to the point where you have tons of excess inventory and you are doing this more or less full time.

If you decide you want to sell on Abe Books, start by clicking on the Sell Books link at the top of the page.

When you click on this link it will take you to a page that explains how to get started. Listing a book is very simple once you have entered your books into the software program. This can take a while and you don’t want to be paying fees while you are getting everything set. So, start by downloading the free software. Once you have your entire inventory entered, go back to Abe and take the steps to open an account.

**Selling Your Books to Abe**

Abe Books will also purchase books from you. The price they offer is usually pretty low, but it can net you more than donating your books to a thrift store or the library.

When you click on the Sell Books link, a page comes up with an option that says: *Just A Few Books to Sell.* If you click on that link you will get a page with the box shown left on it. You can search by author, title, keyword or using the ISBN (probably the quickest method since you can enter as many ISBNs as you like).

I entered the ISBNs for three of my books and got the following results:
As you can see, the price they are offering is pretty low—about 20% of what I could sell any of these books for on Amazon or eBay. *Titanium eBay* has a cover price of $24.95 and *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to eBay* that I wrote with my daughter-in-law Lissa is priced at $18.95. Abe Books also buys textbooks but, once again, the price they offer is really low.

The one time I will sell books to Abe is when I am about to donate books to a thrift shop. I list them in Abe first. Usually Abe will only make an offer on a few of them, but that is OK. At least I get a few dollars for books that I would just donate for a tax credit anyway.

So once you really have a large business you may want to take a look at Abe Books, but I would leave it for then. The only exception is if you were to come across a really rare or valuable book—but even then you could probably do just as well with it on Amazon.
Chapter 15
Selling from Your Own Website

Setting up a website used to be difficult and expensive. But today there are plenty of easy-to-build ecommerce website systems available. If you can type, point, and click you can set up a simple website in a few hours.

There is one major advantage of selling from a website. When you make a sale, your only cost is the cost to process the payment—either PayPal or a merchant credit card account. You don’t pay any listing or selling fees to eBay, Amazon, etc.

Frankly, if you are just a general bookseller, selling all types of books, I probably wouldn’t bother with a website. Buyers will have a hard time finding your website amongst the thousands of other websites owned by book sellers. But, if you have decided to specialize in one genre of books, then a website can be a very profitable enterprise. The reason for this is buyers search by type or even name of books and if that content is on your website it can be found by Google.

If you specialize in one subject it is much easier for people to find your website when doing an Internet search. For example, I collect books on nautical and maritime history. If I search terms related to that subject, I get listings from hundreds of small website sellers.

There are three ways to get traffic to your site:

- **Search Engine Optimization**—This is nothing more than setting up pages with all the relevant keywords so search engines can find you.

- **Build a Mailing List**—Here again, if you were selling general books on a wide variety of topics, very few people will join your list. But, if you focus on one topic or specialty, you will find it easy to gather names and market to them.

- **Pay-Per-Click**—This is nothing more than purchasing ads on Google and Yahoo. When people click on the ad you are charged whether they buy or not. So although this can work it can also be expensive. But, here again, the narrower or more specialized your topic, the cheaper the clicks will be as those keywords are less competitive.

**Website Builders**

First of all, I would avoid the various free website builders. This really is a case of getting what you pay for. There are dozens of other website builders on the market that come with support and ecommerce functionality. Some of them start at prices as low as
$9.95 a month, while others go as high as $90. The difference is features and support. Some very expensive web builders come with features that as a bookseller you may never use—yet you are paying for them anyway.

The one exception to this is WordPress. WordPress is a free blogging software download—but you can make a website with it as easily as a blog. WordPress is very powerful and it adapts to almost all the major shopping cart software—although it’s probably cheaper and easier to just use PayPal buttons—which means you can eliminate the cost of a shopping cart. If you need help setting up a WordPress site, contact my webmaster, Marsha Perry as she is an expert in WordPress and has built hundreds of WP sites. Here email is marsha@perryweb.com. You can also go to Fiver.com and find people who will build a word press website for you very cheaply.

I am going to give you a list of builders, but whichever way you decide to go, check out the features and benefits very carefully. Also make sure your web builder platform allows you to customize pages so search engines can find them. I once had a website that was easy to use and build, and came with all the ecommerce tools but it seemed that search engines couldn’t find it. So I moved it to a basic builder and within just a few weeks the search engines were finding me. Eventually my site earned a Google page rank of 4, which is really great for a small independent website.

Probably the most popular website builder today is Site Build It by Ken Envoy. Ken’s service is so good he has an almost cult-like following people rave about how easy it is, how good the training is, and how easy it is to get traffic and market their site. SiteBuildIt also comes with a built-in newsletter function, so you can collect the email address of your customers and send them email or newsletters to build your repeat business.

Here are some other companies that also provide websites. These are not my personal recommendations—just a list of the more popular services:

- www.HomeStead.com
- www.Buildwebsite.com
- www.Wix.com
- www.sitebuilder.com
- www.websitebuilder.com
- www.wordpress.com
Chapter 16

Bringing It All Together

Bookselling can be a very profitable and rewarding business. If you love good books, as I do, then it really is the best of both worlds. You can make a good living, work from home and you get to read and handle lots of great books.

But, bookselling is a business and if you wish to be successful you have to run it like a business. Here are some tips for running your business successfully:

- **Become organized.** This includes keeping good records, organizing your books, planning your time and focusing on the things that make you money.

- **Manage Your Time.** One of the keys to success in this business is not getting distracted by minutia or spending time on stuff that isn’t important. Time really is money and you want to guard against wasting it. I mentioned several services that can automate some of the listing process. As soon as things start to work for you and you know you want to do this business, I strongly suggest you take advantage of those services.

- **Select your books carefully.** When you are out buying books, be selective. You will make a lot of mistakes at first, so it is important that you learn from them. As time goes on you will become a better buyer and the percentage of unsalable or slow selling books will become very low.

- **Turn your inventory often.** The faster you can turn your inventory over, the more money you will make. You need a certain amount of books sitting on your shelf, but books that sit too long cost you money. Once a month, go through your books and pick all the slow sellers off of the shelf and drop their prices on eBay, Half.com, or Amazon to move them out. Use that cash to buy books that will sell. If they still don’t sell at the lower price, gather them up and take them to the thrift shop for the tax deduction.

- **Be honest in everything you do.** Describe the condition of your books accurately and reveal any faults. You don’t want returns or bad feedback scores. Poor ratings will cost you more money in the long run than any money you might make by misrepresenting the quality of a book. Offer your customers a liberal return policy. Yes, every once in a while some unscrupulous buyer will take advantage of you, but it will help you get more sales and higher prices so you will come out ahead in the end.

- **Pack and ship your books professionally.** This will avoid damage and returns. Be careful about marking up shipping too much. You can mark
shipping up a little to cover the cost of the box and packing materials, but if you try and make money on shipping your customers will not appreciate it.

- **Communicate and give good customer service.** As with any business, good customer service will bring you repeat business. On eBay and Amazon good customer service and communications will earn you higher feedback scores which will increase your sales and make you more money.

- **Understand that everything will not always go smoothly.** You will make mistakes and experience setbacks. This happens to everyone. The real key is to accept responsibility for your mistakes or judgments, learn from them and move on. Most importantly, don’t give up. You can’t really fail at this unless you quit!
Appendix I

Reading List

Here is my recommended reading list for book dealers. Most of these are available from the library or second hand bookstores and you can often find used copies on eBay or Amazon.com.

_Selling Used Books Online: The Complete Guide to Bookselling at Amazon's Marketplace and Other Online Sites_ by Stephen Windwalker (Paperback - Jun 5, 2002) _Stephen’s book makes a good companion to this book. He covers much of the same information that I do, but his insider tips and some fine detail he provides make it worth the purchase._


_Instant Expert: Collecting Books_ by Matthew Budman (Paperback - May 11, 2004). _This is a very good book to teach you how to spot value._

_Book Finds, How To Find, Buy and Sell Used and Rare Books_, by Ian Ellis. _This is one of my favorite books as it is full of great stories and funny anecdotes._

_Among the Gently Mad: Strategies and Perspectives for the Book Hunter in the 21st Century_ by Nicholas A. Basbanes (Paperback - Nov 1, 2003) _This is mostly about collecting rare books and fiction but there is plenty to learn about book collecting and values for everyone. It gives you great insight into the mind of collectors._

_Collecting Little Golden Books: A Collector's Identification and Price Guide_ by Steve Santi (Paperback - Oct 2003) _Children's books are a great specialty and some children's books sell for huge values. The best thing is that they are very easy to find._


_The Care and Feeding of Books Old and New: A Simple Repair Manual for Book Lovers_ by Margot Rosenberg and Bern Marcowitz (Paperback - Mar 1, 2004). _There are better, more complete books on the subject of book repair but they are_
expensive. *This book has almost everything the average book dealer will need unless you go into very rare or older books.*

**Starting an Online Business For Dummies** by Greg Holden (Paperback - April 16, 2007). *Greg’s book is a great simple primer to starting any online business.*

**Three Weeks to eBay Profits: Go from Beginner to Successful Seller in Less than a Month** by Skip McGrath (Paperback - Jul 28, 2006). *If you don't have any experience, this is my best beginner’s book. If you want a more complete business manual, go to my website at [www.skipmcgrath.com](http://www.skipmcgrath.com) and purchase *The Complete eBay Marketing System.**

**Excellent Websites for Book Sellers**


The Rare Books WebRing at [http://i.webring.com/webring?ring=rarebooks;list](http://i.webring.com/webring?ring=rarebooks;list)

has some great resources and links to book information and book selling sites.

[AbeBooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) (Advanced Book Exchange)

United Kingdom version of AbeBooks.com, [www.abebooks.co.uk](http://www.abebooks.co.uk)

IPL: [http://www.ipl.org/div/subject/](http://www.ipl.org/div/subject/)

Online Book Club: [http://onlinebookclub.org/review-requests/](http://onlinebookclub.org/review-requests/)

**Ten Places to Sell Your Books**


A personal website by Steve Trussel started in 1996 has some excellent links on *Books and Book Collecting*. The nature of the site makes it difficult to provide direct links but scroll to the bottom of the page or look in the side navigation menu for the following web pages in particular.

   Page 1: Searchable Book sites. Most of these are above, but this site provides a one-stop shopping point for searching.

   Page 2: Books & Book Collecting. Has links to Bookseller Lists and Associations, Blogs, and Mail-Lists

Foreign Language Book Sources

Out-of-Print Book Search Services
Contacting individual booksellers is probably a good idea, even if you find a listing for your book from one of our other suggestions here. Different book sellers may quote you different prices.

A great print source for finding used and rare book prices is *Bookman’s Price Index*. Published twice a year, BPI is a guide to "prices and availability of antiquarian books in the United States, Canada, and the British Isles." BPI defines "antiquarian books" as being both important and scarce. Each issue of BPI contains price and location listings for 30-35,000 such books.

A serial publication that might be helpful is *American Book Prices Current (ABPC)*, an annual publication covering countries in North America and the United Kingdom. ABPC converted to CD-ROM form after its September 2003 - August 2004 volume.

You may also want to try and find book sellers or books from the phone book. *Yellowpages.com* can help you find old and used book sellers near you and elsewhere.

*Google Maps* will also let you find old and used book selling businesses. Click the "Find businesses" tab.
Appendix II

Resources, Supplies & Tools

For Booksellers

Here are some resources, tools, and websites where you can get more information, do research and find tools, supplies and software to help you build your business.

A Book Easel (pictured right) is the simplest way to stand books up to photograph them for your auctions or listings.

Mylar Book Covers are available from a number of dealers and on eBay. Just search mylar book cover or mylar book jacket on eBay or Google. The ones pictured on the left are from Broder—one of the largest manufacturers, and are easy to find online.

The Book Covering System from Colibri (pictured right) is a real timesaver. I wouldn’t invest in something like this at first, but once you are doing some volume this is a great way to quickly put protective covers on your books. www.colibriusa.com

Demco at www.demco.com carries a range of book covers.
General Suppliers for the Book Seller Industry

Book Repair:

Archivart/Heller & Usdan, Inc.  
7 Caesar Place  
Moonachie, NJ 07074  
(201) 804-8428

TALAS  
568 Broadway  
New York, NY 10012  
(212) 219-0770

Bookmakers  
6701B Lafayette Avenue  
Riverdale Park, MD 20737  
(301) 927-7787  
fax: (301) 927-7715  
www.bookmakerscatalog.com

University Products  
517 Main Street  
PO Box 101  
Holyoke, MA 01041-0101  
(800) 628-1912  
www.universityproducts.com

Conservation Resources Int'l  
8000-H Forbes Place  
Springfield, VA 22151-2204  
(800) 634-6932

Gaylor Brothers PO Box 4901  
Syracuse, NY 13221-4901  
(800) 428-3631 - help line  
(800) 448-6160 - orders  
www.gaylord.com

General Preservation Products:

Conservation Resources International  
8000-H Forbes Place  
Springfield, VA 22151-2204  
(800) 634-6932  
fax: (703) 321-0629

Hollinger Corporation 9401 Northeast Dr.  
PO Box 8360  
Fredericksburg, VA 22404-8360  
(800) 634-0491  
hollingercorp@erols.com

Light Impressions [photographic]  
PO Box 940  
Rochester, NY 14603-0949  
(800) 828-6216  
www.lightimpressionsdirect.com

Brodart publishes a book care page on Abe Books at:  
www.abebooks.com/docs/RareBooks/bookCare.shtml. This includes almost  
everything you need to know about the care and handling of books.
Specialty Supplies

**Bookbinding equipment**
American Graphic
150 Broadway
Elizabeth, NJ 07206
(908) 351-6906

**Mylar enclosures**
Atlantic Protective Pouches
PO Box 1191
Toms River, NJ 08754
(732) 240-3871
fax: (732) 240-4306
app1191@aol.com

**Exhibition tools and supplies**
Benchmark
PO Box 214
Rosemont, NJ 08556
(609) 397-1131
fax: (609) 397-1159

**Surface cleaning supplies, small tools**
Charette Corporation
P.O. Box 4010
Woburn, MA 01888-4010
(781) 935-6000/6010
(800) 367-3720 - orders

**Phase Boxes (Micro Climates)**
Custom Manufacturing, Inc.(CMI)
831 Boyle Rd
Fairfield, PA 17320
(717) 642-6304
fax: (717) 642-6596
cmiboxes@cvn.net

**Art supplies, surface cleaning supplies, small tools**
Dick Blick Art Materials
PO Box 1267
Galesburg, IL 61401
(800) 447-8192- orders
(800) 933-2542- product info
fax: (800) 621-8293

**Binder's board, book cloth, heavy binding equipment**
Gane Brothers and Lane, Inc.
1400 Greenleaf Avenue
Pamphlet binders, protective enclosures, endsheets, and book cloth
LBS - Archival Products
PO Box 1413
Des Moines, IA 50305
(800) 247-5323
www.archival.com

Archival storage materials
Metal Edge, Inc.
6340 Bandini Blvd.
Commerce, CA 90058
(800) 862-2228
(888) 822-6937

Archival storage boxes
The Paige Company Parker Plaza
400 Kelby Street
Fort Lee, NJ 07024
(800) 957-2443
fax: (201) 461-2677

Deacidification supplies (Bookkeeper process)
Preservation Technologies, Inc.
111 Thompson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(412) 779-2111
(800) 416-BOOK
fax: (724) 779-9808

Deacidification supplies (Wei T'o process)
Wei T'o Associates, Inc.
21750 Main Street, Unit 27
Matteson, IL 60443
(708) 747-6660
fax: (708)747-6639
weito@weito.com
http://weito.com

Software Programs for Book Sellers
Collectorz.com Data Base Software for Media: www.collectorz.com

Basil Bookstore software: www.addicosolutions.com

Book Accents Software: http://spectrum.crtsys.com

ScanPower Automation for those who use Amazon FBA

**Glossary of Terms**

Alibris lists a complete list of terms related to collecting books and the book selling industry at: www.alibris.com/glossary/glossary.cfm.

The Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America lists a glossary of terms related to antique and rare books and manuscripts at:

www.abaa.org/books/abaa/abaapages/glossary.

Appendix III

Expensive Books List

It is pretty easy to find the most expensive books selling on Amazon. First go to the Amazon home page and select the Book category. Now when the search bar comes up, type a left and then right square bracket into the search bar. It will look like this [].

Now hit go. Once the complete list of books comes up, look to the upper right of the page and find the drop down box and select Price—High to low. This will bring up the list of books selling on Amazon in price order.

Below is a list of books that will sell for $250 or more. I came across this list on a website a while ago. The website didn’t have a copyright notice or anyway to contact the owner. I don’t know the source and I could not find out how the list was compiled. But I checked the prices against Amazon and Abe Books and the list is surprisingly accurate.

It doesn’t really matter that this list is a bit old, because most of the titles are timeless. These are highly collectible books that are always in demand. There is a mixture of fiction and literature, but as you will see, by far most of the books are non-fiction.

The list is by no means complete. Believe me there are thousands of books not listed here that sell for these prices and more. For example, *Relativity: The Special and General Theory* by Albert Einstein. A 1920 first American edition translated by Robert W. Larson and published by Henry Holt sold recently for $12,500. The dealer who found the book bought it at an estate sale for less than $100.

But it is a pretty good checklist. You may want to carry it in your car in case you come across a good stock of old books and look up some of the titles. They are alphabetical by price range. Some of the titles are not complete, but they are close enough that you could be pretty sure if you’re looking at a copy in your hand, or you could Google what is here to get the full title

- 25 prints of Leopoldo Méndez by Méndez, Leopoldo $2,475.00
- Such Things Are Known by Burdick, Dorothy $2,474.99
- Helmut Newton's Sumo [Hardcover] by Newton, Helmut $2,000.00
- Travels and adventures of Dr. Lynn: with a supplement showing "how it's done..." $2,000.00
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<tr>
<td>Childhood memories from behind the barbed wire:</td>
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<td>The legacy of German American internment during World War II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative of the Voyages Round the World, Performed by Captain</td>
<td>Captain James Cook: with</td>
<td>$1,500.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>James Cook: with an Account of His Life During the Previous and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Intervening Periods</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>War letters [Unknown Binding] by Crosby, Harry</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,300.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 Nights by Clapton, Eric</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,290.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>A journey in North America, containing a survey of the countries</td>
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<td>$1,238.50</td>
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<td>watered by the</td>
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<td>Sierra Nevada: The John Muir Trail by Adams, Ansel</td>
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<td>$1,200.00</td>
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<td>Shell craft animal oddities by Stearns, Dottie</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,099.00</td>
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<td>A photographic atlas of the moon (Annals of the Astronomical</td>
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<td>Observatory of...</td>
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<td>Foreign direct investment: rules of application, (Foreign income)</td>
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<td>by Ullman...</td>
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<td>Groups of cattle, drawn from nature, by Cooper, Thomas Sidney</td>
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<td>$1,000.00</td>
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<td>History of Union County [Unknown Binding] by Parks, George E</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Introduction to the physics of nuclear weapons effects</td>
<td>by Bridgman, Charles J</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mapplethorpe by Mapplethorpe, Robert</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Souvenir of General Richard Gentry: A Missouri pioneer and soldier</td>
<td>by Gentry...</td>
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<td>Synergetics Dictionary: The Mind of Buckminster Fuller--[Hardcover]</td>
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<td>$1,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applewhite</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The New York Trilogy [AUDIOBOOK] by Auster,</td>
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Paul

The recent work of Fred Wesley Wentworth, Architect, Paterson, New Jersey... $1,000.00

Trampa para niebla (Colección La joven poesia) by Gea, Juan Carlos $1,000.00

Voice Cries Out Amid Religious Confusion—[Hardcover] Armstrong, Herbert W. $1,000.00

A monograph of the William K. Vanderbilt house: Richard Morris Hunt, architect $900.00

The Italian bronze statuettes of the Renaissance, (German Tuberculosis Classics) $900.00

Jensen FF by Woodhams, Ulric $899.00


New York 1929 [Unknown Binding] by Powel, Gretchen $800.00

Sword Guards and Fittings From Japan: The Collection of the Museum of Decorative Art, Copenhagen $800.00

Atlas of Normal Developmental Roentgen Anatomy by Keats, Theodore E. $750.00

The law and practice of the High Court of Admiralty of Ireland: Under the Court $750.00

Criteria for Moisture Control by Brundrett, G.W. $700.00

The Italian Bronze Statuette of the Renaissance by Bode, Wilhelm $700.00

Comprehensive Rock Engineering: 5-Volume Set by Hudson, John A. $650.00

Genealogy of the Bliss family in America by Bliss, Aaron Tyler $650.00
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<td>Live in Japan [Hardcover]</td>
<td>Harrison, George</td>
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<td>Antennas for Radar and Communications: A Polarimetric Approach</td>
<td>Mott, Harold</td>
<td>$611.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>Antennas for Radar and Communications: A Polarimetric Approach</td>
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<td>Helmets of the deep</td>
<td>Lyons, Leon G</td>
<td>$600.00</td>
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<td>Hoodoo - conjuration - witchcraft - rootwork</td>
<td>Hyatt, Harry Middleton</td>
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<td>Mammal Phylogeny--Szalay, Frederick S.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>The history of the Muhiyals: The militant Brahman race of India</td>
<td>Stracey, T</td>
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<td>Violin Iconography of Antonio Stradivari [Hardcover]</td>
<td>Goodkind, Herbert K.</td>
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<td>Japanese Box, The [Hardcover]</td>
<td>Schifferli, Christoph</td>
<td>$600.00</td>
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<td>The Japanese Box with Other [Hardcover]</td>
<td>Schifferli, Christoph</td>
<td>$580.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Japanese Box. [Perfect Paperback]</td>
<td>Yasumi, Akihito</td>
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<td>The Cunetio treasure : Roman coinage of the Third Century A.D</td>
<td>Besly, Edward</td>
<td>$580.00</td>
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<td>The Italian bronze statuettes of the Renaissance, (German</td>
<td>Tuberculosis Classics</td>
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: Roman coinage of the Third Century A.D by Besly, Edward

Ad quadratumThe Italian bronze statuettes of the Renaissance, (German Tuberculosis Classics $555.00

Genealogical Abstracts of Revolutionary War Pension Files: Vols. 1-4 [Hardcover] $551.00

Songs of Central Australia [Hardcover] by Strehlow, T G H $535.00

Songs of Central Australia--Strehlow, T. G. H. $525.00

Oriental Coins & Their Values: The Ancient & Classical World [Library Binding] $525.00

Winston S. Churchill. Part 2: 1929-35 the Wilderness Years by Gilbert, Martin $520.00

Pilgrimage by Mukherji, Savitri Devi $502.00

Surgical diseases of infants and children by Guersant, M. P $501.00

A descriptive treatise on mathematical drawing instruments: Their construction $501.00

A way of seeing $500.00

Ames is the Name $500.00

Ames is the name: A genealogy [Unknown Binding] $500.00
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<td>by Ames, Richard DAmes is the Name</td>
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<td>Bifurcations: Sights, Sounds, and Mathematics</td>
<td>Matsumoto, T. Aull-Meteer and allied families of Ireland, Virginia and Missouri</td>
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<td>Biographical memoir of Rev. John Lothrop</td>
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<td>Booby the bear (The Cooperative series: vacation church texts)</td>
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<td>Buck fever, by Johnson, Eldridge Reeves</td>
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<td>Catalog of Fishes</td>
<td>Eschmeyer, William N.</td>
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<td>Claxton, Jazz Life: Limited Artist's Edition 1</td>
<td>Crist, Steve... CCS Security Source Library: Vol I - XII</td>
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<td>Contributions to the study of the development and larval forms of echinoderms...</td>
<td>Crist, Steve...</td>
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<td>Control of physiological functions by hypnosis</td>
<td>Erikson, Milton H</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data Book on Mechanical Properties of Living Cells, Tissues, and Organs</td>
<td>Abe</td>
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<td>Diana Vreeland : Immoderate Style--</td>
<td>Martin, Richard</td>
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Die Familie Blessing und das Orchestrion: Entstehung und Entwicklung der...Diana Vreeland: Immoderate Style--[Hardcover] Martin, Richard

Edward Gorey's original drawings and sketch designs for Dracula by Gorey...Die Familie Blessing und das Orchestrion: Entstehung und Entwicklung der...

F.N. Souza [Unknown Binding] by Souza, F. N

Edward Gorey's original drawings and sketch designs for Dracula by Gorey...

General Studies of Charles Dickens and His Writings and Collected Editions of...F.N. Souza [Unknown Binding] by Souza, F. N

Genetics of Hand Malformations--General Studies of Charles Dickens and His Writings and Collected Editions of...

Hew by Viesulas, RomasGenetics of Hand Malformations--

Hommès Et Institutions De L'Italie Normande (Collected Studies)

Hommès Et Institutions De L'Italie Normande (Collected Studies)

Icsd '01: Proceedings of the 200` IEEE 7th International Conference on Solid...Hommès Et Institutions De L'Italie Normande (Collected Studies)

Jacob Martin physician Huguenot of Charleston, South Carolina, his ancestors...Icsd '01: Proceedings of the 200` IEEE 7th International Conference on Solid...

John Aull, Scotch-Irish American, 1823-1893 [Unknown Binding] by Aull, EdwardJacob Martin physician Huguenot of Charleston, South Carolina, his ancestors...
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<td>L'absinthe : histoire de la fâee verte--Delahaye, Marie-Claude</td>
<td>John Aull, Scotch-Irish American, 1823-1893 [Unknown Binding] by Aull, Edward</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Life and times of S.H. West: With an appendix on evolution, religion and...</td>
<td>L'absinthe : histoire de la fâee verte--Delahaye, Marie-Claude</td>
<td></td>
<td>$500.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madame Goubaud's pillow lace patterns, and instructions in Honiton lace making</td>
<td>John Aull, Scotch-Irish American, 1823-1893 [Unknown Binding] by Aull, Edward</td>
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<td>Manes organized advocacy: A manual for the litigation practitioner</td>
<td>Manes organized advocacy: A manual for the litigation practitioner</td>
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<td>Megamouth— a new species, genus, and family of lamnoid shark (Megachasma...</td>
<td>Manes organized advocacy: A manual for the litigation practitioner</td>
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<td>Memoirs and letters of the late Colonel Armine S.H. Mountain, C.B: Aide-de-camp</td>
<td>Manes organized advocacy: A manual for the litigation practitioner</td>
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<td>Microneurosurgical Atlas by Sugita, Kenichiro</td>
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<td>Mind Control and the Assassination of President Kennedy--Russell, Dick</td>
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<td>My working friend: Being plain directions for the various stitches in fancy...</td>
<td>My working friend: Being plain directions for the various stitches in fancy...</td>
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Ode to a grand staircase (for four hands) by Chen, Julie
Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan: A living legend by Ruby, Ahmed Aqeel

Organized advocacy: A manual for the litigation practitioner by Manes, Ronald D

Our troubles in Asia: A story of persecution by Devirian, Sarkis H

Picasso: Catalogue of the edited ceramic works, 1947-1971 by Ramie?, Alain

Picturesque views of American scenery. 1820 [Unknown Binding] by Shaw, Joshua

Psychotechnology of Brainwashing: How to Reprogram Your Mind

Reminiscing with the Sundance Kid by Kirby, Edward M

Spanish & English Dictionary of Technical & Scientific Terminology Diccionario

Tamiris in her own voice: Draft of an autobiography by Tamiris, Helen

Tex Avery's Comic Language: 10 Years of Creation at MGM: 1942-1951 [Paperback]...
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<td>PhenomenonTex Avery's Comic Language: 10 Years of Creation at MGM:</td>
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<td>1942-1951 [Paperback]...</td>
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<td>The founding of the New School for Social Research by Bolotin, Nancy</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
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<td>The history of mind control: From ancient times until now by</td>
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<td>Christiansen...The founding of the New School for Social Research by</td>
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<td>Bolotin, Nancy Ruth</td>
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<td>The Marlborough gemsThe history of mind control: From ancient times</td>
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<td>until now by Christiansen...</td>
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<tr>
<td>The misty scary night of Halloween by Krasik-Geiger, Malika</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
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<td>The Marlborough gems</td>
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<td>The new art of memory: Founded upon the principles taught by M.</td>
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<td>Gregor von...The misty scary night of Halloween by Krasik-Geiger,</td>
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<td>Malika</td>
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<tr>
<td>The opportune man: Sermon by Bitting, William C</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The oriental album: Twenty illustrations, in oil colors, of the</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>people</td>
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<td>The rustic Genji of a bogus Murasaki =: [Nise Muraaki inaka Genji] by</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ryutei</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Sampler, or, A system of teaching plain needlework in schools by</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady</td>
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<tr>
<td>Township Atlas of the United States by Andriot, John L</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
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<td>The Supernumeracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Township Atlas of the United States by Andriot, John L</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verdi's Macbeth : A Sourcebook [Hardcover] by Rosen, David</td>
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<td>Trial techniques with Irving Younger: Four videotapes on the craft of</td>
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