



# BookManagerNews

January 2009

Hi Everyone,

It's time for a look back at 2008 and also some of things we have planned for 2009...

## Are we having fun yet?

I've had serious reservations over the past six years or so about all of this out-of-country manufacturing, globalization, corporate consolidation, zero savings, massive personal debt, colossal government debt (esp. in the US), low-low interest rates, low or zero-down mortgages with 35-40 year amortizations, leasing cars instead of buying them, "don't pay until 2050" claims, crazy house/stock market prices, people with no investing acumen playing the stock market, and most of all—the increased leveraging and credit-swaps done by giant corporations. Do 'ya think that maybe, just maybe, we've pushed the envelope a little too far? Interesting times lay ahead as we challenge the "debbie-downer" concerns that I've been pondering for some time. I'm hoping that we will wake up and smell the garlic (now being dumped into Canada by China, thus hammering yet another Canadian industry). It's time for some fundamental changes.

I occasionally write letters to the editor in our local paper... I'm thinking that this might be the start of a good community rant.

## BookManager is alive and well!

Last year, 24 new and existing stores joined the over 400 stores that use BookManager, bringing our present total to 435 (including

118 Christian stores). A small handful of our existing stores have unfortunately had to close their doors, but thankfully the trend is not significantly up from previous years. We also have a number of non-BookManager stores using our **TitleLink** and **PubStock** services to keep them current with new titles and vendors.

*Note: I have been watching national sales trends online (you can too if you send weekly sales reports to BookManager) and the majority of the 285 independents reporting on a regular basis are showing positive increases. The trend is slightly lower than a year ago, but not as gloomy as the barrage of negative nightly news. Let's stay positive (yet realistic) and remember: books will always remain a staple for most people.*

We have approximately 120 suppliers listed on **PubStock**. Our bibliographic service, **TitleLink**, is the most up-to-date and comprehensive listing of data in Canada. This is made possible through regular data submissions from some 170 publishers, distributors, wholesalers and bookstores; we have 285 bookstores sending us weekly reports of the ISBNs they sell. This information makes it possible for **TitleLink** to rank your search results from over 5 million ISBNs and thus presents the most popular titles followed first by the obscure, but still available. One hundred and ninety-four stores are submitting daily updates of

the titles they have in stock as well as on order. This gives us the ability to look ahead and rank forthcoming titles based on the selections made by hundreds of individual book buyers.

I am proud to be a part of this industry. Through consolidated efforts from both independent bookstores and their suppliers, we have a very strong Canadian book community. Let's keep building on that!

### **It's renewal time for your continued updates and support of BookManager**

Stores using BookManager for more than one year will have their support expire on **January 31st** of this year. **This newsletter will contain a renewal notice** if your store's support has recently expired or is soon to expire. Our annual fees are based on flat rate of \$500 plus \$25 for each additional licensed workstation that you have beyond the first. Renewals are set to expire on **January 31st** of the coming year and fees are calculated based on the number of days between your last expiry date and the new one. The vast majority of our customers pay the renewal fee every year. If your renewal notice covers a period of more than two years, then the renewal rate is fixed at a maximum of two years. This retroactive fee structure is designed to encourage stores to remain current with fee payments. The revenue from renewals covers a significant amount of our costs to run BookManager and feed our staff of seven. Without a regular flow of renewal income, BookManager would be unable to service our narrow market.

Payment of your renewal gives you a year's worth of access to unlimited telephone and email support, which covers BookManager issues as well as some practical bookselling advice. You are also entitled to download

new versions of BookManager to take advantage of new features and enhancements that address the changes in technology and the book industry. Finally, if you are using any of the online services provided through your **WebStore** hosted by BookManager, your support dues must be paid in order to continue using them.

So, with my annual sales pitch now complete, I would like to thank everyone in advance for your continued support in 2009!

### **Updating your version of BookManager**

BookManager is continually advancing with new and enhanced features. Rarely does a week go by where something isn't done to implement a specific or general request. However, unlike software such as Microsoft Windows, we do not automatically update your version whenever a change is made. The reason is that there is always a chance that a change could negatively impact someone or, in the case of a coding error, everyone. When Windows updates their software, thousands of willing "guinea pig" users (beta-testers) have already tested changes before they are automatically installed onto millions of working machines. Unlike Microsoft, BookManager does not have a large base of customers to test with. Instead, we rely on a small but random selection of stores who obtain a new version that will contain the most recent changes. In the unlikely event that a change causes a problem, we work directly with this small number to immediately fix the issue.

Are you up to date? Your BookManager "Main Menu" screen has the version number and date. We are currently running version 9.1 and the latest build we have is dated January 19th, 2009 (e.g. 9.1\_090119, which uses a "yymmdd" date format). If your version is prior to 2009, then now is

probably a good time to upgrade to the latest. In the future, you may want to obtain a new version every few months, or whenever a new feature useful to your store is added.

***Note:** You should always make a backup of your data before installing an update because there are times when your data is significantly altered... and an interruption part way through the conversion could be messy. Most updates take only a minute or two to complete.*

To obtain an update, use any computer running BookManager and go to: **Main Menu → Data Transfer → B) Get or install a new version of BookManager** Then, **Request a new version via Weblink** (which must be running). The download happens silently and should take less than a minute. Selecting **B) Get or install a new version of BookManager** a second time should now show the option to **Unpack and optionally install the BM.ZIP dated xx/xx/xx**. The rest of the update process requires that all computers using BookManager be exited (as opposed to being excited).

### **What's new in BookManager?**

Version 9.1 was released in May 2008. The support for dial-up modem ordering was dropped and the *F3 Message Writer* was reworked (now called *F3 Messaging*), to allow more features while sending memos and orders via email and fax. Support for using the MyFax.com faxing service (offered by a Toronto-based company) was added to provide another alternative to the DOS modem faxing that is becoming obsolete to BookManager. These are the only changes that might cause a significant surprise.

Many new features have been implemented at BookManager. Instead of

detailing them all in this newsletter, we'll mention a few that are significant: we now have a **TBM News** page on our website that is updated every time we make a noteworthy change to BookManager. You may want to review the **TBM News** on the menu of our website before deciding to download and use the latest version. Feel free to poke around and use a keyword search to browse within our **TBM News** postings – there are plenty of hidden gems of information that may either solve your

***Note:** To view the News --> TBM News menu option you must be logged in with your store's SAN and password (at either the bookmanager.com site or your store's BookManager site). Your store's SAN is found in BookManager under <Alt>Setup --> q)Your Company Name, and the password is in the Supplier file under supplier TBM. Otherwise, please call us and we'll help you log in.*

problem... or blow your mind!

### **BookManager's support and development team** *(a.k.a. your servants)*

Some booksellers are not aware that we strive to provide help beyond technical issues or recovering from something that went terribly wrong (Internal Error 1010!!!). BookManager operates our very own Mosaic Books, so we know what it's like. The bookstore uses most of the features in BookManager and faces many of the challenges that stores everywhere face every day. If you are wondering how to approach a problem or opportunity, it might be worthwhile to give us a call for some bookseller-to-bookseller advice. BookManager employs seven people. **Michael Neill** (me!) does most of the DOS BookManager programming and company-wide systems design as well as tending to the various challenges that a software

company and bookstore with 19 employees in total faces. **Eric** and **Michael Batchelor** (the genius brothers) are responsible for the development of our data services and web-based development. They are also working on the grand plan to migrate BookManager from the DOS world (**Ryan Barber**, a programmer at BookManager from years ago is currently helping us on this initiative). **Carley Bortolin** handles graphic design (the artsy stuff) as well as manages the majority of the bibliographic content within **TitleLink** and **PubStock** (a huge task in itself). **Kellynda Scherck** is also heavily involved with the data and publisher side of things, except that she got pregnant again and therefore left us in December to be a mom for the next year before returning to BookManager. (Kellynda makes very cute babies!). **Diana O'Neill** has been at BookManager for almost a year now after working in the bookstore for some time. I steal only the very best from Mosaic when I can, which drives my wife **Michele** (Mosaic's mom) nuts. Diana is excellent with support and problem solving, and she has a passion for books and people... and sarcasm. She is also the occasional star on our local radio station taking about books. **Kristi Barr** is our latest and treasured addition to the support team. Kristi has many years of non-book retailing experience, including management. She is learning about our industry quickly, and her understanding of retail and POS systems is helping her to get up-to-speed with BookManager. Kristi took over my son **Trevor's** position after he decided to fly the coop and search for a music career in Vancouver. That idea didn't pan out fast enough, so he's back in Kelowna and working in the bookstore with a focus in marketing, merchandising and a number of things that bring new energy to the store. He works with his sister **Alicia**, who manages receiving as well as being an important overall asset to the store. The family business atmosphere is something I

treasure at BookManager and Mosaic Books. Heck, Michele & I should have had a dozen kids!

### BookManager Online

A handful of stores are making more use of their online **WebStore** hosted at <http://www.bookmanager.com>, even if the online store is not intended for their customers. This service is free provided that you have current support, having both a **TitleLink & PubStock** subscription, as well as scheduling routines of sending both sales and Onhands. Your DOS system must be scheduled to send sales data once per week as well as a nightly feed of your current Onhands. Using BookManager online is something that I would like to encourage more stores to explore, and **Title Browser** is an excellent place to start. It will give you a taste of some of the very powerful things that cannot be accomplished efficiently in the DOS BookManager.

### Title Browser Online

Use your SAN as part of the [bookmanager.com](http://bookmanager.com) website address to access your online store. For example, if your SAN is 1234567, enter [www.bookmanager.com/1234567](http://www.bookmanager.com/1234567) into your browser's address bar. If we have activated your site, it should appear with something very basic that would likely only have your store name at the top. Next, in the login area you will need to enter your SAN again, as well as the password stored in DOS BookManager under supplier TBM. Once you are logged in you should be able to access the menu option **Browse → Title Browser**. This is one component of the site that book buyers are finding very powerful for discovering new titles and backlist information. Last fall, I used **Title Browser** to order \$12,000 worth of Penguin titles and beef up our selection for a Penguin promotion. I am not Mosaic's book buyer (i.e. messing in an area that I shouldn't) yet I relied on both national and Mosaic data

(and a nice bottle of wine) to make some pretty good decisions at home while in my robe and slippers (scary visual, eh?). I then submitted the order and it magically appeared in our BookManager system at the store. Sarah, Mosaic's lovely book buyer, had a quick overview of the order (and made some cuts) before submitting it to Penguin. The next evening, my close friend Nancy Wise, owner of Sandhill Book Distribution, drank the other half of that bottle of wine, while using Mosaic's site to build us a decent order of her titles. Sarah was again able to review Nancy's selections before sending the order to Sandhill. This is an example of the power of "collaborated buying" technology using the knowledge of both rep and buyer.

A few things need to be set-up to make all of this wizardry happen with ease, and that's where a call to BookManager comes in handy. After using **Title Browser** once or twice to select some new books from a particular category or supplier, you will likely discover a whole new way to order books. **Title Browser** may become your best tool, should the industry continue its path to reduce the role of the catalogue and the rep. However, I still want to support my reps because they have knowledge to help me get the most from their lists; show them **Title Browser** and perhaps some new opportunities will arise.

Finally, it's important to note that your data on the **WebStore** is not "live" and up-to-the-minute like it is in your DOS BookManager. Lately, I am working with nightly backups of Mosaic Books data to make the online data timelier and with the additional relevant information needed to make certain ordering decisions. When we get that stage of development more complete, you will be given the opportunity to do the same as Mosaic Books. I must say, it's a pretty exciting looking into the future of BookManager.

## BookManager News and Sales are Online

There is a quick and easy way to stay informed with the latest at BookManager. As mentioned earlier, BookManager.com (and your store's site) now has a **News → TBM News** menu option available when you are logged in as your store. It contains the latest changes to DOS BookManager. Ultimately, in the future, I would like to have booksellers post comments, suggestions and advice for benefit of all of the independents in the industry.

Also, if you are sending sales data to us, you will soon start receiving a weekly email reminder containing a link to the weekly sales report that compares your store's *book* sales for the past two years, against the rest of the country. There is a lot of helpful information on the page if you take the time to learn about each component. For me, it's now a two-minute review once a week.

## Useful Tips for DOS BookManager

- **POS → Misc → Date Range Subtotal:**  
We use this report to summarize sales for a period and compare it to the same period a year ago. For example, I wanted to know how this year's boxing week compared to last year.
- **F4 Class and Section codes:** The Classes in F4 should be grouped into Section codes by adding a two-character section code to each Class. For best results, try to limit the number of section codes so that your end-of-day and financial reports can give you information in a broader sense. We use section codes to group Fiction, Non-fiction, Kids, Magazines, Bargain Books, Non-book, Greeting Cards and Toys (at

this level, I don't see the point trying to manage 50+ section codes). The end-of-day/month POS totals will show us the performance (sales, profit margin) in each Section.

- **Customer Type field:** We have a significant number of schools buying from Mosaic Books. We use the one-digit Customer Type field in **6)Customers** to identify schools as type "3". The POS totalling uses this to group sales by type of customer.
- **Thermal Labels for items on Sale:** We are experimenting with a new label style to use on our best-selling titles discounted by 25%. The printer setup for book labels has a pricing option that can include an X (for Xtra label). Books that have a //%25 in the Inventory Notes field are then printed with a normal price label (for the back of the book) and then a Sale price label that is designed for the front of the book (to bring attention to the discount).
- **Accounts Payable Sell-through reports:** Even if you do not use **Accounts Payable**, the data in this area is still useful. For example, if you received a shipment from a supplier and are curious to know how well it's selling, use **Accounts Payable** to find the Supplier (press <enter> to view the invoices) and then use <P>rint and select one of the Sell-through reports.
- **Sales By Supplier:** You'll find this under **0)Reports → Supplier Reports**. The summary version of this report can take sales for a period and group them by

the suppliers whence the goods were purchased from. This shows you how much business is done with each of your suppliers.

- **Supplier file Exchange and Markup Rates:** Setting the Exchange (Exch) rate for your supplier is often overlooked but critical in BookManager because it will dramatically change the net value of your inventory report at the month-end period. First, make sure that all of your Canadian currency suppliers are set to **CA** in the *Crncy* field and your **US** suppliers have **US** in this field. Next, find any supplier with **CA** and make sure that *Exch* rate (and *Markup* rate) is set to 1.00. This action will force all of your **CA** suppliers to use the same values. Then, find a **US** supplier and set the Exch rate to match what you paid most recently for the purchase of **US** funds. If you pay **US** suppliers by credit card, you would use last month's statement to find a recent purchase that was converted to Canadian funds. For example, a \$1,000 **US** purchase may be on your Visa statement as \$1,250, which represents a 1.25 Markup from the **US** value. Now enter 1.25 into the *Exch* rate for a **US** supplier so that all of your US suppliers will share this rate and be applied to future receiving (note: a common but serious mistake is to inadvertently change the *Exch* rate on a **CA** supplier). Keeping the Markup rate current is not as critical as *Exch* but we ensure the Markup rate is set to 5-10 points over the *Exch* rate (e.g. if Exch rate is 1.25, Markup rate is 1.30). The Exch rate is used in Receiving to set the Canadian cost of books you receive

from the US, and the Mark-up rate can save you time by calculating a *suggested* retail price if you zero the existing retail price. Month-end then uses the Inventory Cost field to calculate the value of your inventory; if you have the Exchange rate set incorrectly, your inventory value could be grossly out of whack.

- **BACKUP, PLEASE!** Last but not least, we encourage you to backup on a regular basis—and not only that, please ensure your backup system is functioning properly. We have had two stores recently lose all of their data because their backups were either not being done regularly or the media (harddrives, DVD-Rs, etc) they used was faulty. Personally, we still like the inexpensively priced Bic lighter-sized USB memory sticks (the smallest capacity ones available today are ample for BookManager, and you should have one for each day of the week). To ensure the data was transferred, simply click “My Computer” and then click the drive letter assigned to the USB memory stick to view the backup file’s date and size. The motto at our office is, *“no backup...NO JOB!”*

And so this brings to a close another fairly lengthy (but hopefully entertaining) newsletter – gee, and we did it the old-fashioned hard-copy way to boot! As always, we are here to listen to issues that arise and we encourage you to put your support fees to work by bombarding us with feedback and suggestions! All of us here at BookManager are optimistic about the direction in which we

are heading. We owe a big high-five (and even a hug) to all you independents out there who are working hard to keep Canada’s book industry alive, diverse and interesting! I hope that you are all able to find joy in this business.

We should have story time one day to talk about the funniest customer experiences that I’m certain are part of your days in the store. Mosaic has sure had some doozies, which helps me keep things in perspective and reminds me to enjoy the ride each and every day.

Hang onto your hats this year!

...independent businesses can have significant advantages when they keep the creative thoughts flowing.

- Michael Neill  
*(and the BookManager gang)*



# Great Stuff From BookManager!



Cognitive Advantage DLX  
**\$515**

Thermal barcode label printer. Quick and quiet one-up label designated printing on removable thermal labels. Connects via USB or parallel (parallel cable included, USB cable sold separately).  
*1 year warranty*



VoyagerGS Laser Scanner  
**\$225**

Metrologic MS9590 USB laser barcode scanner with automatic stand scan mode. Off the stand the scanner operates by trigger, but when replaced it will enter constant scanning mode making it the ideal scanning solution for receivers.  
*5 year warranty*



Samsung POS Thermal Receipt Printer  
**\$370**

Thermal receipt printer. Fast and silent printing with an auto cut feature. No ribbons needed. Each model is equipped to be both parallel and USB adaptable.  
*2 year warranty*



Eclipse Laser Scanner  
**\$155**

Metrologic MS5145 laser barcode scanner. Quick connection to any computer via USB.  
*3 year warranty*

## Data Services

TitleLink  
*starting at* **\$1000.00**

Annual subscription to TitleLink, our bibliographic data service spanning over 5 million titles. Includes a free Backlist subscription or CBTitles subscription. Price dependent on number of stations running in your store.

PubStock  
**\$200**

Annual subscription to price, availability and sourcing for over 2.4 million ISBNs. Includes stock positions from over 120 vendors in Canada, the US, and the UK.

Additional Stations  
**\$250**

License for each additional networked computer workstation. (One-Time Fee). \$25 will be added to your subsequent yearly renewal for each additional station.

\*\*\* prices subject to change \*\*\*