



# BookManagerNews

January 2010

Eureka! A snail-mail newsletter (unless you're reading this online). I tend to think that the occasional printed material is still in vogue; after all, that's still pretty much our role in this fast-paced world, right?

Happy New Year everyone. 2009 was something out of the ordinary with a feeling of change on a number of fronts (both past and future). Thankfully, I'm the 'Glass Is Half Full' type of guy, which has served us quite well in an industry faced with ongoing challenges. We've had not only Chapters, Amazon, Costco and Wal-Mart to contend with, but also U.S. pricing, overall discounting and the economy to beat us down. Luckily we are a resilient bunch. But, I guess the latest hurdle is the e-book. I'll have my say on e-books later in this newsletter.

BookManager Renewals are included with this mail out. If you get bored reading my rants, at least pull that piece out so that you can (hopefully) make it fit it into January's expenses.

## Welcome newbies!

About fifteen of you are reading the annual BookManager newsletter for the first time. That's because you've opened a new store and wisely chosen BookManager. Congratulations! Thank you for bringing your talent and energy to the book industry. 2009 was a tough year for a few of our existing customers who regrettably had to close, but on the whole, we remain strong with over 430 active stores.



McNally Robinson closes two stores

This news initially shocked me. McNally Robinson's family run business has run two large

and successful stores in Canada for many years as well as a library wholesale division. Recently, they expanded and opened two new locations (Winnipeg and Toronto). Unfortunately, the new Toronto location missed their sales target by a large margin, and as such, they quickly ran into cash flow problems that seriously impacted the whole company. It sounds like they are taking swift action to stop the haemorrhaging and return to operating two strong locations. In that sense, my initial fears that the industry might be heading into trouble was calmed once I realized that their situation was unique to the risks associated with major expansions. I wish them the best as they work through the mess.

For most independents, my motto has always been "one farm, well tilled". Expanding from one location to two is a much larger step than it appears. They may neglect the fact that the owner's personality in the store is part of the charm, and with two stores they have to split that important role. They also may have forgotten about the many months/years it took to build their store's presence in the community, and that a similar timeframe may be needed for the new location. Your second location business plan must be realistic and account for a possible scenario that is 30% less business than expected. Running the figures through that theoretical situation will likely reveal a large monthly cash outflow that must be pulled from the excess cash generated by the main store. Owners have found themselves working at least twice as hard with their take-home pay being diverted to keep the books, rent and staff paid. The new store may show signs of growth, but time may be against them to get there.

I am not suggesting that everyone just accept their current situation. On the contrary, I like to encourage stores to consider ways to increase their presence in the community. Most stores are smaller than what the community can support. It's often difficult to recognize this because it may feel that your present store is doing all it can, and getting bigger just to pay more rent and finance inventory seems pointless.

In 1997, our Mosaic Books was doing \$1 million in sales in Kelowna, and the only other bookstore was a Coles in the mall doing about \$800,000. Things seemed balanced and the community was well-served with bookstores. The following year, Coles was replaced with a giant Chapters store and our sales dropped by 30%. We then moved and expanded into a location 3 times the original size. By 2000, our sales were \$1.2 million and we estimated that Chapters was doing around \$5 million. So, my question is; where did the additional \$5.6 million in sales come from, when we thought that \$1.8 million in the community was sufficient?

For most of us, location is the single most important decision affecting sales. Bookstores need to be where people walk and shop. Or, simply put another way, people who walk by a bookstore are often tempted to visit and make an impulse purchase. If your store has 10 people per hour walking by, and you move it to a place where 100 people pass, your sales should double/triple even if the store's size and selection remains the same. The reverse holds true, so be careful with the temptation of moving to a lower rent district to save on occupancy costs. Some of your loyal customers may follow you, but the reality is that customers eventually move or die, and you may end up hidden from the newbies that you need as replacements. Opportunities don't come to you, they hide and you need to find them.



As I continue to think what to include in this newsletter, I realize that there are many things to talk about. My mind never stops dreaming, and I'm sure that most of you also have ideas that need a sounding board. Or, you should be sharing your successes (and failures) so that we can learn from one another!

Our store's sales grew by 12% this year. We rejigged the store in anticipation of a large rent increase, closed the coffee shop and integrated our separate bargain store into the main store. Not only did we realign fixtures and design new signage, but we were more careful with targeting our advertising, as well as focusing our skills in a means to solicit the local school libraries. Also, we built up our annual 20% off November sale, did the Chapter's 30% off hardcover boxing week thing and reduced our discounted bestsellers from 30% to 25%. Most importantly, (and this is where we toot our own horn) – [we made extensive use of BookManager's online TitleBrowser](#) to maintain a very tight, yet complete, selection of the books people are looking for.

So on that note, here is my proposal for 2010. The BookManager website (and your data that is now increasingly integrated with it) is something that more of us are using every day. We have a **TBM News** area that is convenient to get to, and I would like to open this up for booksellers to submit their thoughts. Most of these group idea initiatives have failed because too few people contribute to keep it fresh and interesting (the chicken and egg situation?). We may need a little time to get this enabled for input, but why not take a moment now and send me ([mneill@bookmanager](mailto:mneill@bookmanager)) a summary of things related to the book industry that are on your mind. If I receive more than a handful of thoughts, I can probably get motivated to develop a means to post those thoughts to be shared and debated.

The bottom line is, more than ever before, we need to increase our communication so that we can prosper in the coming years.



## Review of 2009 Sales

We have over 285 stores reporting weekly ISBN sales to BookManager. This data allows us to gauge the overall health of the Canadian independents. Last year we started sending weekly email reminders to those who participate, so that they too can digest the trends. If you are not receiving this notice or you need help accessing and understanding it, please contact us. The goal is to make it easy for you to take two minutes or less once each week and review the big picture. If it's not easy, then we haven't done our job well enough yet. Feedback, please.

For the past 52 weeks the graphs show that our group increased sales by 2%. Keep in mind that these are new book sales (anything sold with a valid ISBN) and therefore may only represent a portion of your store's revenues. About 50% of stores experienced an increase and the other 50% declined by varying levels. Hmm, what are those 140 stores on the increase side doing right? We need to learn from them! Christian store sales rose by 5% overall, while the secular stores were only up 1%. Stores in the West (Manitoba and on) were down 1% and those in the East were up 7%. From this information, I am suggesting that we all become Christian bookstores and relocate to eastern Canada! That was easy, ha. By using the Sales Comparison options on the website, you can narrow the results down in this manner to see how you are doing compared to others closest to your demographic. If you are more on the left side of the graph (i.e. down more than the average), then maybe there are strategic changes you can make instead of blaming the situation on the economy, online ordering, Chapters, e-books, yada yada yada.



## e-Books and the end of the world as we know it (or not)

The hype on e-books was huge in 2009. You would think that we finally figured out how to make reading on a device so much better than

those blasted paper books. 2010 will be an escalation of this rage, and it will likely provide us with some real feedback as to how much this e-reading technology is likely to impact printed books.

I had a Sony Reader given to me over a year ago and I've loaned it to several people. The initial excitement was there in most cases, but so far it's been tried and handed back with '*a thanks but no thanks*'. There is no doubt that the latest concoctions are already better than my e-reader (e.g. wireless download and more titles), but I think the real hurdle for the e-book is the manufacturer's ability to make the actual experience of electronic reading as pleasing as a physical book. For us die-hards it's obvious that something is very different (or missing) and it's just not as relaxing.

The retail music industry has been dwarfed by MP3 players and downloads from iTunes, so it may stand to reason that the book industry will mirror this. However, I make a big distinction in that listening to music, regardless of whether it's on an iPod, satellite radio, disc or vinyl, is pretty much the same experience – in that you close your eyes and your ears hear the same music regardless of it's format. On the other hand, a book can be read from a variety of mediums (e.g. newspaper, paperback, computer screen or LCD tablet display), and each has it's own very distinct characteristics. The physical book has many pleasing and practical features that will be hard to improve upon.

The other observation is the art of finding a book or album. When shopping for a CD, it's not easy to listen to what you are holding and considering to purchase. Most often you just make your decision and hope it works. A bookstore, however, offers thousands of titles that can be quickly and thoroughly examined. Even powerful book sites like Amazon (with their "look inside" feature, etc), cannot present the consumer with literally thousands of tangible choices in a matter of seconds.

For these reasons I am bullish on the physical book format and it's survival for many years to come. Publishers should not ignore the e-book, but they must continue to focus on the medium

that will remain as their primary source of income.

Will bookstores sell e-books? I am referring to the prospect of having a customer visit my store to purchase an e-book. I doubt this will be viable. I don't know anyone who visits their local music store, and then asks the clerk to ring through a sale for the download code of a song or album. Isn't it easier (and cheaper) to just do that from home through one of the global online music stores?


Bookstores are useful as a place to discover something new, and as a convenient place to obtain the physical product. If publishers allow stores to sell an e-book download code along with the physical book, then we may have a useful role in e-books.

[End rant #1]

Now, onto the world of BookManager.




Over 280 stores subscribe to TitleLink. The vast majority of you use it to search from BookManager and add title information to your local system. However, only a handful of stores have discovered that there is much, much more to TitleLink when they use the service online. The benefits may not be obvious until you've set aside some time to discover how TitleLink can help you buy inventory. January and February are great months to make this happen.



TitleBrowser was recently expanded to encourage sifting through 5 million ISBNs instead of only the top-selling 175,000 titles. You can now search really deep and become the proud owner of the most eclectic bookstore in Canada. ☺

At Mosaic Books, we use TitleLink online throughout the day to find suitable books from specific catalogues and preferred suppliers. We use it every Tuesday to review new releases and forthcoming titles. We add titles to our cart, each with the desired supplier and proper Inventory Class field. Orders are then submitted to our local BookManager and appended to our existing pending orders in order processing.

Most of us are comfortable with the traditional way of using BookManager, and as such we tend to disregard the need to try something new when *"the old procedure is working just fine, thank you"*. It's been interesting though to see how a new bookseller approaches the daunting task of making their initial book inventory purchase. Several of our new booksellers have stocked their entire store by making thousands of selections from the website. Their computers have both DOS BookManager and their online WebStore always open to interact with each other.



You should update your local BookManager to the latest version because we've made changes that improve the flow of information between your local BookManager and your online WebStore. Use Main Menu → **Data Transfer** → **Update BookManager** and follow through the steps.

It's time for you to discover TitleLink online. It's very addictive and quite an enjoyable process. We are applying the majority of our programming efforts to enhance this area further, because it offers booksellers new opportunities to make their stores strong within the community.

We are here to help! A one-hour telephone call with a remote connection will help you get setup to discover the possibilities.

Use **[Alt]** Setup → WebStore to verify that the “Enable communications with your WebStore” option is set to **Yes**. Go to Inventory, press comma (,) and then **Format**, and then **[Esc]**. This will send your current PubStock preferences to your WebStore.

To get started online, you need to know your SAN (see **[Alt]** Setup → Company Information) and then your TBM password (Supplier File under TBM). Then, go to Inventory and press **Web** on any title. This should take you to either *www.bookmanager.com* or your site, *www.bookmanager.com/{yourSAN}*. If the top of the page has your company name displayed, then you are at the correct site. Otherwise (TBM BookManager is shown), contact us and we’ll immediately enable your personal WebStore. Every BookManager user with current support (and TitleLink/PubStock) is entitled to a WebStore at no additional cost.

Next, you need to identify yourself as an authorized user of the WebStore by logging in with your SAN and TBM password. Your company name will now appear in the top right corner of the screen.

Use the site to search for a book you have in stock. If you are running the nightly scheduled routine to send us your Onhands, then the title should display the correct quantity beside the Onhand. If not, switch back to DOS BookManager and use the Scheduler to add a New event called “Send Onhands to TBM using Report \_\_\_\_.” This should be scheduled to happen daily just shortly after your store’s closing time, but you can **Start** it anytime (like right now) to have your Onhands immediately updated. When this completes, your site should show the quantity in stock (use F5 to refresh the screen or Search for the title again). It may take a minute for your site to recognize the new information that you just uploaded.

## Using TitleBrowser

Choose Browse → TitleBrowser from the online Menu. This is where you will discover millions of titles neatly organized in many different ways, and with all sorts of filters to list just what you are interested in.

### Note

The options to filter to “In Stock OnOrder only” may not work if you just submitted your Onhands for the first time. At present, we only update this filter once each night and you will therefore have to wait until the next day to use that feature.

From this point there are many ways to discover books. Play with Recent Releases as a starting point.

## Ordering online

Choose any title and then click the box that looks like a place to enter an order quantity. An order window should appear with PubStock data displayed below it. You need to now enter a quantity and a supplier to place the order with. With your test title(s) ordered, use the top right of the screen to get to your Cart. This screen works much like Order Processing in BookManager. Use the Submit link to send the test order to your local DOS BookManager.

Back in DOS BookManager, Update your Order Processing and you should see the online order(s) listed with each vendor, yet separated with the letter “O” (or whatever letter you choose). This concludes my Reader’s Digest version of TitleBrowser and online ordering. We are available for free one-on-one tutorials.



## Taking online to the next level

As you work with the online information, you will probably wish you could see more of your local BookManager information (e.g. History of orders, sales, and returns for each title). This is now possible and is a considerable step forward in making BookManager online very effective.

To view your local data online, you need to use the Scheduler to start sending your full BookManager backup to our server. This subscription requires an annual fee, which is mainly to cover our costs for transferring large amounts of data to us every day. You also need to contact us and give permission to enable unpacking the data each time a new backup is received. This will make your local DOS BookManager visible on your WebStore, but only to people logged in with an authorized username and password.

With the local data now installed, the order card now offers you the option of attaching one of your local Classes to each new title. There is also a space to enter information into the Inventory Notes field. Over time there will be more fields available, but for now these are two important ones to reduce the steps required to complete creation of a new title in your Inventory file.



## Detailed history of a title

Whenever titles are listed on the site, you have the option of either changing the display format to "Inventory Display" for the entire list, or choosing to see this for only one title (just click on the Title). The right half of the screen should now show the familiar BookManager 14-month history for the ISBN. Unlike the DOS version, there are separate rows for Returns and Adjustments. Also, at the end of the Title there is an arrow icon that will swap the bibliographic information between TitleLink and your local information for the same ISBN. I'm not yet satisfied with this, but it's a work in progress.

Clicking anywhere in the 14-month history area will present a new window that is very similar to the History screen in BookManager. You will discover that you can also click on a particular PO#, Invoice# or Customer Name to see the information related to it. Essentially, this is a whole new way of working with your BookManager data, except it's online!



These new features are in constant development. At this stage, we are essentially experimenting with a variety of techniques and visual displays until we are satisfied that the online data is at least as useful as the DOS version most of you are accustomed to. Over time there will likely be some radical changes to all of this. For me (and some long-time BookManager customers), this is reminiscent of the earlier days in BookManager where it took many attempts to get the user interface (what a geeky term, eh?) perfected.



**History Lesson:** It was 1990, and after three years of solid programming for hours every day and night, I finally told my wife Michele that version 3.0 of BookManager was finally perfect and all we had to do was sell it and reap from the benefits. She believed me, just like every spouse is supposed to. Now twenty years later, I feel like we are just getting started (shhh, don't tell Michele).



## Having customers use your WebStore

I'm not going to get into the many aspects of making your WebStore beautiful and functional for your customers. I've covered some of that in the past, and quite frankly, most stores have had dismal results with online orders. For Mosaic Books, our schools have made this the exception. We receive about 10 orders per week from the average customer outside of school accounts (and about \$150,000 per year from schools). Fortunately, once the initial layout is established, maintaining the site to keep it appealing for your customers can be minimal. There are some new things that you have to learn, but they are really not that difficult. We continue to strive to make that process better for you.

Carley is our in-house graphics expert. She loves to help stores get their site looking good, and most of the time she will offer her talent at no (or low) cost, depending on what you want done. She is helpful in taking your store's logo and making it unobtrusive, with balanced colours. You can create custom lists of Featured Titles, but you then have to be dedicated to keep them fresh. We use the News and Events area to promote things, but to be effective it really requires the talents of someone to create the visual impact that online viewers need. Hopefully, someone on your staff has some knowledge to make this happen.

What would I do if I had limited Internet talent or affordable access to it? (Frankly, I'd be hooped without Carley.) I would register a domain name for my store (e.g. [www.crazymikes.ca](http://www.crazymikes.ca)) and then link that to my BookManager WebStore. I would have Carley do the basic visual layout. Then, I would review the Contact Us page to ensure that the map to my store is correct (it's probably already perfect) and that my "hours of operation and contact information" is complete. Visit [www.MosaicBooks.ca](http://www.MosaicBooks.ca) to get an idea. I would forget about featured lists and just let the system present an ever-changing list of recent releases and forthcoming titles. I would then logout and pretend to be a customer by creating

a new account ("I'm New" in the top right-hand corner) with my personal email address. I would order a book or two to understand the process, especially to learn how the store deals with online orders. The latest version of BookManager (9.2) can alert you the moment someone submits an order (yikes! Now what do I do?). In all honesty, most of your customers will not place online orders, but an increasing number will use it to find a book or contact you. Hopefully, Google and other search engines will start to list your website whenever a customer types in your store name to find your hours of business, location and phone number.

It's no longer wise to avoid having a basic Internet presence. Virtually everyone is using the Internet to businesses. Using the Yellow Pages or even phoning the store for information is becoming a hassle for many. Your BookManager WebStore can give your customers a wealth of information, and all you have to do is handle the initial setup and then let the scheduled events keep it up-to-date.

Finally, if you have your own custom website that does more than what we can offer at this time, at least provide your customers with a Search link that will bring them to your BookManager WebStore.

Let's get started! It's early 2010 and it's essentially free.



## Purchasing new computers

***Please keep this in mind or pass it along to your techies...***

Don't be disappointed! There are BookManager incompatibility issues with the latest versions of Windows (both Vista and Windows 7). Windows Vista has been around for a while but it was not widely adopted by the business community, and as such we did not have many issues regarding compatibility with BookManager. However, Windows 7 is much better than Vista, so we expect that XP will gradually be replaced by Windows 7 in the

business world. Anyone purchasing a new computer is likely required to use Windows 7.

#### What you need to know:

Windows 7 comes in two versions: 32-bit and 64-bit. The 64-bit is cutting edge in that it can use massive amounts of RAM (memory) to run very complex applications quickly. It's total overkill for your business needs (it's more for graphic artists, gamers and entertainment systems), but it is becoming the off-the-shelf choice at many retail outlets.

**Warning! BookManager cannot run on the 64-bit system!** (both Windows 7 and Vista come in 64-bit versions). That being said, **Windows 7 64-bit Professional edition (do not get the Home edition 'cause it just ain't gonna work!)** has a free version of XP ("virtual XP") available as an application. BookManager will then run inside of this Windows XP screen. Visually, Windows 7 is your primary screen and then Windows XP mode appears in a window inside of this, and DOS BookManager appears within the XP session. It works (we've used it), but it's not my choice because it adds another layer of things to understand and work through.

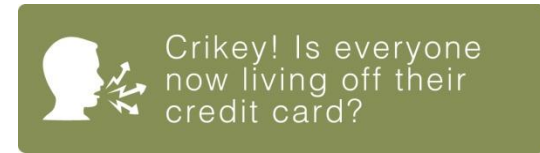
**All is not lost. Windows 7 32-bit (any edition) will run BookManager.** But you must confirm that the computer you are purchasing is indeed installed with the 32-bit version.

**Using Windows 7 as the file server.** We have encountered the occasional corrupted BookManager file when more than one computer uses BookManager files that are installed onto a Windows 7 computer (i.e. it's acting as the server). We have yet to find a solution to this (or reason behind it), so for now we suggest you use a Windows XP computer as the file server (and nothing earlier), unless you are only running a single-user copy of BookManager. You can then safely use Windows 7 32-bit computers with minimum hassle to access the files on the XP computer.

And so, it appears that our days of beloved DOS BookManager might finally be numbered. Fortunately, our WebStore development is headed in the direction to replace DOS BookManager. We have about five years time on our side to get everything out of the DOS

world. I expect that 90% of the new BookManager will be Internet-based, but with the critical routines (e.g. Point-of-sale) being designed to run on a local computer.

Okay - Time for an off-topic rant...



Folks, I think we've been duped. Businesses are now paying for a huge amount of their purchases with credit cards. BookManager's credit card costs have grown from \$3,000 to \$13,000 in less than five years. The percentage they take off a purchase has grown from 1.65% to 2.35%, all because of those beloved frequent flyer points.

Because of this, for 2010 we have made the decision to make a slight overall increase in our prices to help cover these new costs. But to reward those who refuse to encourage the credit cards companies in becoming the new world superpower, beginning February 2010, we are offering a 2% discount off any invoices that are paid by cheque or electronic deposit by the due date (30 days from invoice date). So, if you still need those frequent flyer points, forgo the 2.0% savings to earn 0.25% in frequent flyers points towards your next trip to Spuzum, BC.

Most businesses do not use credit cards as a permanent line of credit because the interest rates are pretty much guaranteed to keep you from ever having enough excess cash to actually pay the damn thing off. Rather, businesses are using a credit card more because it's very convenient and you can get a tax-free (free but not legal) personal trip to somewhere exotic on points. But, it would be interesting to know how many people miss the occasional payment by a few days, only to realize that the interest charged for that mistake was worth more than a whole year of points.

Credit cards costs aren't that much better in Mosaic Books as our merchant rate has gradually increased to pay for people using their "business card" and also those using the cards

that give them “bonus” points. Last month, the charges done using these “exclusive” and “bonus” cards mysteriously turned out to be exactly 100% of all credit purchases we accepted! And the thin edge of the wedge continues to widen... I am now waiting to see my next statement, because Visa tells me I must now accept their Visa “debit” (i.e. prepaid cash card) card and pay a high transaction fee plus a percentage of the sale, all because it was a Visa Debit and not the customer’s bank card. But if I decline to accept that card, they will cancel my whole merchant account, so I am hooped. At least debit fees have been reasonable (but still a cash cow for the banks). But I guess that’s what happens when corporations get bigger than God (or at least they think they are).

[End rant #2]

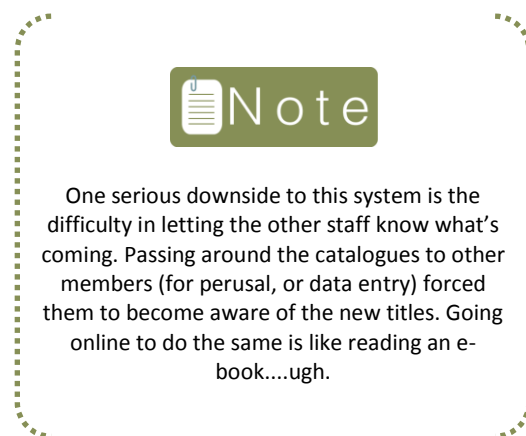


Our publishers are working furiously to rid themselves of those pesky paper catalogues (and possibly also rid themselves of sales at the same time if they don’t get it right!). We’ve heard that Harper Collins’ early attempt to go paperless cost them a bundle in lost sales. I find it somewhat amusing that, in an industry which exists by selling printed material, they are suddenly desperate to drop the paper-based marketing tool. Maybe I should contact Wal-Mart, Superstore, Future Shop, The Bay and every other major retailer and suggest they save millions next year by stopping delivery of three hundred pounds of flyers to my house, because, well, instead I’m planning on visiting 50 websites every morning next Christmas season to see what the latest deals are (yeah, sure). Everyone has a website now but everyone is also sending more flyers than ever before. Something in that tells me there is much value to the paper catalogue. Whatever; while the publishers experiment with paperless catalogues and work towards discovering the serious downfalls of such, we booksellers need to focus on making the online alternatives at least somewhat effective.

[End mini-rant #3]

We have been soliciting the BookManager online catalogue service to the major publishers for about a year now. The appetite has been weak (that surprised me just because they are so intent to go paperless), but I think we are finally getting some attention. For last fall’s list we had Random House and Harper Collins experiment with online catalogues. Today, Carley tells me that she has a number of the large publishers on board to make a stronger effort in 2010. However, using the BookManager online catalogue system is nothing to write aunt Marta about until you first become familiar with using your WebStore and TitleBrowser for ordering backlist. Nonetheless, it’s time to explore your WebStore’s “Lists and Catalogues” page to see what we’re talking about.

The concept should be simple: You select a publisher from the list, then select a season of catalogues, and then pick a catalogue to work from. The books are presented in the traditional BookManager online format, hopefully with cover images and annotations. The online method has benefits that paper does not. You are able to see how many other stores have already placed orders, and you can use the links to view previous or similar editions to discover how well they performed in your store (and across the country). Then, all you need to do is click and enter the quantity to order. When the order is submitted to BookManager, your new inventory cards should be complete.



I am suggesting to publishers that they continue to print catalogues, but then make sure that the online version assumes the same page order of the printed version. This way, you can be wowed by the flashy paper presentation, and at the same time click the online title to quickly see the additional historical info before placing the order online (and pen it in on the paper version). Or, they could put a barcode beside each item so that all you have to do is scan it to see the online version – wouldn't that be nifty technology?



You can scan any book while you are on the site to invoke an immediate ISBN search. Also, the latest browsers make it easy to have multiple websites open in separate tabs. We often have a primary one open that is deep within TitleBrowser (or a catalogue), and then switch to a separate tab with our site loaded and ready for scanning a barcode or doing an unrelated search. You need to practice these techniques, otherwise you are going to find the online experience slow and inefficient.

I have also suggested that publishers provide us with the ISBN link to their online marketing information for each title. We could then provide a button to take you there (and back).

All of that being said, the online catalogue/list concept is expected to be very useful for special buys. For example, if Wiley offers you 99% off all Dummies books purchased during the month of March, they can simply post a list to the site in seconds using the Dummies ISBNs and call said list, "Selling Books Too Cheap for Dummies". In fact, we used this last year (but only at 60% off). We were able to make a very accurate order based on what we already had in stock and how well each title was performing. It took one person fifteen minutes to build and submit a \$1,000 order!

## Let your reps go crazy!

Finally, we've made it possible for a sales rep to visit a store's site (by using their company login to identify that they are indeed a rep), find the catalogues they created, and then create a suggested order for your online orders. The order is submitted in a manner that allows the store's buyer to review the selections and make further modifications. In the olden days, a rep would visit a store, perform a stock check and then suggest a new order based on their product knowledge and the past performance of the store. This new approach is our attempt to accomplish a similar goal (but with, heaven forbid, no human contact). Thankfully we have "virtual" reps who are still excellent and eager to ensure we have a good selection of their books. If your rep can provide you with good value from this new concept, then it will be another crucial reason for them to remain employed in the book industry instead of trying to sell me high-yield bonds that might explode any day now.

## Online Backups

This is a new service that we started last summer. Eighty stores have signed up and so far I've yet to see any cancellations. For a whopping 18 cents per day you can have your backup.zip file sent to us (up to 30MB). We retain the last 10 backups sent, which you can then download anytime from bookmanager.com, provided that you use your username and password. Should you somehow manage to lose your data or local backup, the online version could become your best friend forever. Send us \$65 for one year of backups, and if you miss a beat, we'll nag, pester and otherwise drive you nuts until you get us a new daily backup. No more restoring an old backup from six months ago because, "I thought so-and-so" was supposed to be managing the backup procedure.

Seriously, we will send you an email every time a backup is received, and also send you a warning email when your last backup is over two days old. And, if you ignore both of these, you will get a phone call. Why? Because after many years of customer support at BookManager, we know just how ugly things can get when your backup system fails you.

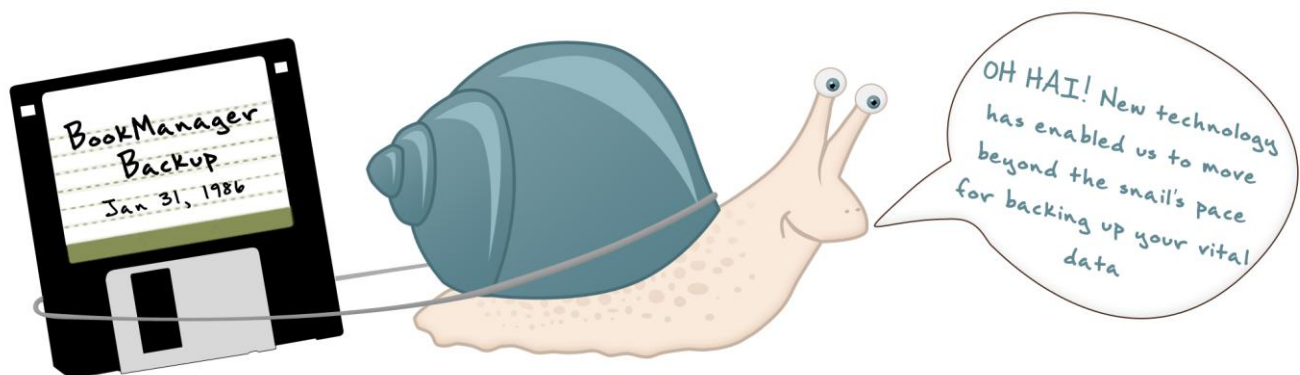
Go to the Scheduler, create a new event called "Backup BookManager (option:c)" and then forget about it once you've receive your first notification. But please also contact us first so that we can turn it on.

Finally, even if you find the online backup too pricey, the latest version of BookManager offers a substantial improvement to the age-old ZIPBM backup system.

**new!** BookManager improvements done in 2009

- Improved local Inventory keyword searches: What you have in stock now appears at the top of the list instead of scattered amongst 200 entries.
- Customer file keyword searching: You can now find Harry (type Harry), or Mary (type in her cell phone number stored in the secondary phone field), and Larry (he lives on Main Street).

- Better overall stability: We found a way to decrease the chance of BookManager files getting corrupted. We also made BookManager a little smaller so that it runs better in Windows Vista and Windows 7.
- Use <W> to automatically load up your WebStore and display the title. Why? Because you need to know what it looks like in order to find it amongst the stacks or show your customer what it will look like.
- Receiving will highlight titles that possibly need your attention. Books ordered but never shipped (even though they were confirmed), now appear at the end of the receiving list to reduce the chance of missing out on important sales.
- Customers may now have their account setup to donate (transfer) their frequent buyer points to another account.
- Stations are notified the moment a customer submits an online WebStore order.
- Accounts Payable improvements for credit card payment and electronic fund transfers (details below).





## Accounts Payable improvements

Now that almost everyone is paying their bills by credit card (contrary to my earlier lecture/rant), I've made a number of changes to make the process of linking supplier's invoices to a credit card payment easier. In a nutshell, you can now use the "Issue Payment" screen to create a new "bank" that actually links the payment to another supplier (e.g. VISA). You authorize the supplier to smoke your Visa card, and then use "Issue Payment" from their A/P screen to transfer the invoice(s) total to the VISA account. Then, access the VISA A/P account just as you would for any supplier, mark the transferred payment totals, and "Issue Payment" using the bank that you normally pay your credit card bill from. The new system also makes it easier to reconcile foreign currency invoices to the actual amount charged on your credit card.



## TelPay electronic bill payments

We recently worked closely with a long-established Winnipeg-based company called TelPay. In BookManager, we now use the A/P to pay our suppliers by transferring the payment to a supplier called TelPay (i.e. the same procedure as Visa). Every Monday we access the TelPay supplier account, mark the "transferred payments" and then "issue payment" for the lot. Next, we start up a program provided by TelPay and import the batch of payments and submit the details to TelPay. Finally, we make a single electronic funds transfer from our bank's online bill payment system to TelPay. Your job is done and the rest is magic.

TelPay is able to electronically deposit most of your payments to each supplier's bank account. Those who they are not familiar with are immediately mailed a physical cheque along with the details of your company name and the invoices you are paying. We pay rent, utility; almost everyone we deal with on a regular basis.

Your bank reconciliation is easier because there is only one withdrawal for each TelPay session. You did not have to print or handwrite a single cheque, nor did you need to purchase and stuff envelopes or pay the postage to mail them. TelPay charges you 50 cents to deposit each payment and an additional 40 cents if they have to mail the cheque to your supplier. Your supplier receives payments the same day that you pay them (electronic deposits only).

Our bank charges us \$1 to clear each cheque we write. I've calculated all of the costs related to making a physical cheque payment and I have determined that we save between \$50 and \$100 per month using TelPay. I have also been able to have our bookkeeper prepare payments to our supplier and then use TelPay to send me an email that I use to review and then authorize payment. I'll be in Mexico for two weeks this coming February, and I plan to release payments while sipping on a banana daiquiri as I lounge by the pool in my Speedo (image not necessary, the girls say.)

Give us a call if you are interested in TelPay (sorry, but I'm not sharing my Mexican casa). We have a detailed information package to get you started along with a minimal one-time fee.



## Who's who at BookManager?



**Kellynda** is back after producing another wonderful baby and spending a year with the ankle biter - she now has two, but cringes when I suggest that she needs a third! Kellynda is responsible for a number of things we do at

BookManager, but she has a serious focus on improving the industry data and prodding your suppliers. Actually, maybe we should tie her tubes so she can focus on saving the book industry. Kellynda has more energy than four nuclear plants.



**Carley** has a fancy new apartment and just got engaged (ooh la la). Carley was responsible for Kellynda's duties and now the two of them are working on keeping the publishers interested in supporting our efforts

to make their titles more accessible to the independents. Carley is also crazy-obsessed with anything graphics related. That's a good thing, especially if you ever need something aesthetically-pleasing to be done in order to improve your store's image. Mosaic is blessed to have Carley nearby.



**Diana** has this strange and unique personality that somehow keeps us all sane, through her biting and sarcastic remarks. If this Ottawa-native ever gets the itch to move back home and quits, I quit too, OK? She has gained immense knowledge of everything

TBM-related and is ever so patient in guiding you through the myriad of options. Hopefully, with her dry humour, she keeps you sane, too.



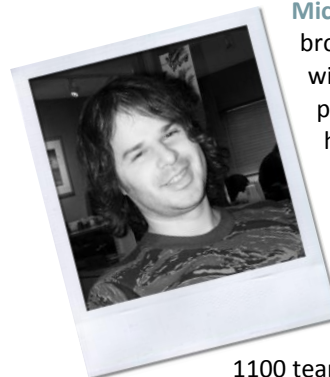
**Kristi** is well-travelled, has a lovely "hubby" and just passed her first anniversary with BookManager. Wow, she is a fast learner, and someone who actually enjoys the aspects of the General Ledger and accounting (like me) –

Carley and Diana are immensely relieved! Kristi's bubbly voice is a welcome addition on the phone line and her support patience is to be admired.



**Eric** is the guts behind all of the latest development. His mind would scare most people. Send us your support renewal ASAP so that we can keep this guy inspired. He loves his work and we love him for it. This hot commodity loves

fast motorcycles and is currently taking applications for Ms.Right.



**Michael B.** Is Eric's twin brother and he partners with him on the programming front. We have a tough time getting him to work by 8 am, but somewhere around noon (until whenever) his engine starts to hum like a fine-tuned Suzuki

1100 tearing up the Okanagan's Coquihalla highway. At the moment little Mike is making your WebStore capable of accepting online payment through PayPal. I have to watch him though, because he may be tempted to round the fractional cents to support his love of travelling to India.



**Ryan** is back with the BookManager team, except the bugger (and his girlfriend, Viv) are working from a sailboat docked somewhere in Nanaimo, BC. Who woulda' thunk that you could earn a good salary while bobbing up

and down on a boat in the middle of nowhere with only a wireless Internet connection? Ryan was the first genius behind all this online BookManager stuff (and PubStock/TitleLink, etc), but left us a few years ago. We are so happy to have him back. At present he is working on the local BookManager display stuff that I'm very excited to see finally get developed.



**Michael N.** (that would be me at 52 years). You already heard about my Speedo, right? 'Nuff said (except that I love my work, too).

*[On behalf of the BookManager team:*  
We love our crazy boss for his

"rockstar" pants, sneezing fits, cheesy jokes and everything in between. Life is never dull up here in the offices of BookManager and without our Boss Man Neill, we'd be done! With his mentoring instincts, Michael ensures our team purrs like a well-oiled machine through his non-stop work ethic and Energy Bunny-like initiative – take that Hallmark!]



It's renewal time!

You knew that bit was coming, right? Otherwise, why would I be writing this newsletter?

Most of you have your annual support and software update plan set to expire on Jan 31st 2010. It's once again time to consider if the efforts we've made to keep you current with technology is worthy of another \$525 bucks or so.

We now have eight people (three programmers, four support staff and me), and with the gradual migration of this massive system from DOS, we need the financial support from our base of just over 400 stores. We occasionally hear from stores who prefer not to pay because they don't use our support often, but the reality is the majority of our costs are related to keeping things running and adapting to the newest technology. I am pretty certain that in today's world, if you stand still for too long, you will most certainly get run over, even if you are a seasoned bookseller. We aim to be there throughout the ride.

BookManager has evolved to become more than a stand-alone software system, hopefully for good reason. If your renewal should lapse, the WebStore features, ftp site (for electronic ordering, invoices and multi-store data exchange), online Backup, program updates and unlimited telephone support will become unavailable.

Our renewal terms and price have changed slightly.

- Support Renewals paid before 90 days after your expiry date are based on \$525 for the first station and \$26 for each additional workstation. You can deduct 2% from the invoice total if you make the payment by cheque within the allotted time. Keep in mind that the services mentioned above will become unavailable from the expiry date until we receive payment, and that your new expiry date will remain at one year from the last expiry date. Essentially this means that you should get your payment to us before your renewal expires.
- Support Renewals that are paid any time 90 days past the expiry date, are based on \$1050 for the first station and \$52 for each additional workstation. Your new expiry date will then be one year from the date we receive payment.
- One-time telephone support calls (after a lapsed renewal), will be billed at \$80 per incident and payable by credit card before support is given.

#### Consolidating subscriptions:

Many stores are subscribing to a combination of Support/Updates, TitleLink, PubStock and Online Backups. We can align the expiry date for all of your services and pro-rate them to expire at the same time. You can then choose to pay one invoice for the whole year. Or, if the invoice total is more than \$1,000, you can spread the payments over 12 equal monthly payments. In this case we will add 7% to your invoice subtotal. If you send us 12 post-dated cheques, you can deduct 2% from the monthly payments, otherwise we will use your credit number on file to process each monthly payment. Let us know your preference and we'll send you a detail of the calculations and payment schedule. The enclosed renewal invoice is based on making one payment for a renewal but can be altered to meet your preference.



Your monthly payments must be processed on time to ensure that the online services are continuous. We cannot honour monthly payments for invoices under \$1,000.



That's the scoop for now!

I am hoping to find the opportunity to speak with many of you over the coming months. There is a tsunami of new things trickling down the line, both technology and industry related. There should be many opportunities for all of us to grow. Sharing the knowledge we need to make things better will require participation from the whole bookselling community. If you haven't been in touch with us for a while, please call or send us an email. We need to know what's working and what's not.

It's truly an honour to serve so many fine people. Thank you for this privilege.

- **Michael Neill**  
(and the BookManager gang)

# Great Stuff From BookManager



**Special!** FREE box of labels and FREE shipping with every Cognitive printer purchase!  
*(approx \$130 value - promotion ends March 31st 2010)*

## 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 \$230

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 \$425



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 \$165

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

## Data Services

### TitleLink starting at \$1025.00

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 \$210

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 \$275

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