

Michael's Rant 2016

Another year is put to bed as we look to 2016 and beyond

It's early January and with the expanded team at BookManager now fully into swing we already have renewals done and administrative tasks up to date. Despite the recent increases in some of our fees to accommodate our larger staff, I hope you will appreciate that I am already seeing how we should be able to get more projects done to keep the support, technology, and data, at levels needed to keep everyone's stores strong and efficient.

This letter is a loooong one. Maybe print it so that you can highlight some references to challenge me on later!

Giant snowflakes are falling onto Kelowna's downtown streets as I write this. It's so peaceful...so magical...romantic... but a KILLER for sales, ha! We had a great year and a great Christmas season with many happy customers thanking us for still being the heart of downtown Kelowna. My how times have changed though, and this digital age continues to transform us all for better and for worse. Perhaps it's the community feel our store has remained true to. I went for a few groceries at our local independent at 5pm last night, but they had just closed for their annual staff party (good on them!) and so I went to the big box. The lines were long and I couldn't help but notice that in each lineup someone was staring into their phone while others were wearing ear buds. No desire to interact with people in this place; the message was: get your stuff and use the self-checkout if possible. It's pretty much the same everywhere now and perhaps that's why our store is becoming more charming even though we've not changed all that much. So here's a toast to the bookstores everywhere who have changed enough to remain profitable but still human. I still love this business and I hope you take a moment every now and then to realize how important you are in your community.

We are about people and conversation both in the store and at BookManager. I want to thank everyone who keeps the smiles on the crew here. While it's not face-to-face, the phone conversations are almost as good, and I truly appreciate the many kind words and gifts you've passed along as recognition for their hard work. They are proud to be a part of your business and the never ending puzzles to be solved.

Our goals are to help you be successful through the use of technology and the sharing of information and ideas. Most of our ideas come from your day-to-day experiences. We like to hear about what's working and where we should be paying more attention. I am not on the phones as much but the office is still a small and lively hub of stories being continually exchanged. Whether by phone or email, keep those experiences, challenges and frustrations coming. There's a handful of store owners I talk to on a regular basis, but I welcome anyone who wants to speak directly to me about business in general.

Now, just who was that old guy in the Merry Christmas photo we emailed 'from the Neills'? That pose was supposed to be tongue in cheek but it's scary now that I am just a couple of years away from turning 60. I am slowly getting used to being called sir almost everywhere now, ha. But I'll do my best to sit up straight and try to look as young as my mind still feels. So many ideas always rattling around up

there and there never seems to be enough time but we persevere and also make certain to smell the roses that are abundant. If the news in the media is any indication of the realities elsewhere in the world, we have a lot to be thankful for, amen!

With that bit of fluff out of the way, it's onto business talk!

How were your sales?

Mosaic was up 9% in December and 14% for the full year. We sold over 4,700 colouring books and crayons (go figure)! Overall, units sales were up 10% (real growth), which indicates that prices must have increased by 4%, most likely due to the falling Canadian dollar. *BookManager Analytics told me all this in less than 30 seconds.* My earlier rant seems to have inspired many of you to play with this very powerful tool. People are finally catching onto the benefits. The Analytics interface could be improved, especially for newbies, but **tip #1** is to change the Ending Date BEFORE changing the Start Date. If you hover over the Start Date (instead of clicking) the date ranges given are usually what you are looking for. Then click the underlined Supplier or Class to break things down for the period. Or, use the Class Dropdown, choose Art (a.k.a. colouring books, ha) and then click Supplier to see where your best colouring book sales are coming from. Click the Blue and Brown graph bars to see the titles. Hover over Start Date and choose Month-to-date, then click Previous to get a month-by-month history. Or, choose Year-to-date from the Start then Previous to see the annual sales trends. There's gold in them there bits if you practice digging. You don't need to spend hours (except perhaps to start with), but practice with it now to gain the skills you'll use to instantly answer all kinds of questions. I rarely use the POS end-of-day report anymore except for bookkeeping and instead use Analytics nearly every day because it's so fast. For example, today, sales tanked but we were still up 150% from the same day of the week (Monday) last year. No way! Oh....now I remember; last year we had nearly two feet of snow fall on January 5th.

January Clearance Sales

We have a big storewide 20% off sale mid November every year where sales more than triple compared to the same weekend before and after. This year, and after listening to what some other stores are doing, we are going to try the same thing during the third weekend in January, as I am told this is the best weekend (timing is important!) and it's just before we start returns. We anticipate that our major suppliers will help us (like they do in November) by doing a shared markdown on the weekend's sales. Fewer returns is good for all so long as it's easy to hold the sale. We gave up on putting only selected titles on sale because it didn't draw many customers into the store and the cost involved to setup and dismantle was much more than the few additional sales. For this event we are going to rely on sending emails (no print or radio as we don't expect sales to triple and warrant the expense). One store I spoke to uses Facebook and asks people to Like them which enters them into a \$50 draw. Great idea, especially if we can get as many likes as I was shocked to hear they did. For a little extra cost apparently you can boost your post and get even more followers (does this make you feel antique? no worries... you are not alone, but not too old to ignore its value, right?). Get some giant RED "20% off 3-days only" signs for the window(s) that you can reuse each year. Then, when the sale is over use Analytics to confirm that you really didn't lose that much margin (but realized more profit), especially if you are able factor in rebates.

Shipping and delivery headaches

2015 was a year of change in distribution with our largest suppliers closing Canadian warehouses in favour of anticipated improvements through shipping from US facilities. Unfortunately, Harper Collins' plans did not materialize and we were forced to try and stay on top of Christmas by anticipating demand at least three weeks ahead. The merger of Penguin and Random House has made for huge shipments that complicated receiving in the small spaces most of us have. For the West, we are truly grateful for Raincoast's Book Express division stepping in to help by increasing their stock so that our shelves were not bare of the season's fastest moving titles. Had the delays in getting books occurred in any other year we could have relied on US wholesalers more but the tanking Canadian dollar pretty much shut that channel down, unless you were content with running your business like a charity with terrible margins.

Meanwhile, in the US, publishers have made efforts to get books to stores in two or three days on a regular basis. More on this later.

Our team grows

Carley is back three days a week after playing full-time mom for the year with their new baby girl. She's anxious to help Kellynda with chasing down all the publishers' data and catalogues, while also lending her talent and knowledge in design and overall support. Our former Torontonion, Melissa, now has her feet wet enough after rewriting the retched manual that was still referring to floppy disks and that new fan-dangled thing called the Internet! More work is needed before the manual is to be released but Trevor is now working on screen shots and editing. Melissa's other goal, in addition to helping with support and administration, is to start making contact with stores we hope will discover BookManager. As the world of software and technology grows in complexity, and expands its tentacles into everything we do, we need a larger user base in order to be sustainable to keep per-store costs manageable. It's the right time to promote BookManager to the US independents.

Quintin is a bright young man and has now been programming with us for a year and a half. The learning curve is huge and it takes time to wrap your head around all the things we do, but he is a fast learner. At the moment his focus is taking some of our past development a few steps back in order to make new development and features more future proof. For example, our websites are awful when viewed on a phone (and now apparently essential for everyone in the grocery lineup or crossing busy intersections). Stock Checker broke after the major browsers imposed new security rules (sigh). That's just the tip of the proverbial iceberg in technology-land, so we REALLY appreciate the many of you who actually took the time to write us to say that increasing support costs was a practical move at this time. I was actually anticipating a huge backlash because some things that were free (i.e. included in the basic costs) are free no longer so that we can keep this bicycle-for-three-hundred (stores) as finely tuned as possible in a race that competes with apps developed by companies with hundreds of programmers and used by millions (or billions).

New stores

We had 20 more stores start using BookManager in 2015, Wahoo! This was our strongest year in recent times and we're taking that as a sign that retail bookstores really do have a future (eBook sales fell again). What could help the increase in independent bookstore is an event that got us all together so

that new business friendships could happen to keep the sharing of ideas flowing. BookManager Academy 2015 was a step in that direction, but realistically with all the work planned for 2016 our next goal for a shiny dig will be 2017. In the meantime, I'd sure love to find a way to encourage some of you to make a new friend or two in this industry. Perhaps a buddy you can call every month or so without any agenda except to discuss business. I have an idea! Maybe we could facilitate a match.com just for booksellers. Just tell us that you are single and lonely and we'll find a match that you can call up and shoot the shit with. What are the chances that, "*Bookseller in Newfoundland discovers and marries West Coast bookseller; gives their stores to the employees and then move to Neepawa, Saskatchewan and opens Romantic Books and More*". And so it goes, a new era of genre bookstores is born and flourishes in towns across America!

Canadian prices

What are we going to do about this one? We can't all move to the US and open stores because otherwise our US BookManager friends would get mad at us. Plus, we'd be immigrants AND we'd have to learn a new language, eh? The Donald would certainly prevent that.

If you can believe your eyes when viewing the currency conversion site xe.com, you now need to charge 43% more than the US cover price of a book purchased from a US source just in order to maintain a normal profit margin. I hear that US wholesaler's business with Canadian bookstores is down 50-75% (and some publishers were shocked to learn we relied on that channel so heavily). This is primarily because, with Canadian prices printed on most books, we cannot pay the US price (less the trade discount) in US dollars costing us \$1.43 and then charge the Canadian "cover price" that is somewhere between par and 25% higher. In effect, our sources for books is now only from the publishers or from a relatively small selection of titles stocked at our small (but still valuable!) wholesalers.

For publishers, it's a double edged sword. For the new books being published, most big publishers are setting Canadian prices at about 25% over US (i.e. they are losing margin). This indicates they are pricing to market rather than currency exchange, which I believe is smart because the Canadian consumer is likely not ready for the sticker shock of books priced at 40% or 50% over US. However, the other side of the blade is that we retailers will be unable to access that extremely important US wholesale channel needed to keep our reputation of providing fast access to millions of books.

Now that most of the publisher-direct distribution is coming from US warehouses (and TAKING FRIGGING FOREVER to get books shipped to Canadian stores), we have our work cut out. The one topic that came up over and over when speaking to a few of you was the disaster in getting books from publishers to your stores on time. It's like we're back in the 80's, but those shipping times were actually acceptable because people didn't have the internet to get anything they could dream of mailed to them at the same price (or less) in two days. If the intentions of publishers are to quickly kill this segment of the retail book market, the fall of our currency AND moving warehouses to the US has been the perfect strategy. Hopefully, some of our publishers are reading this because I can only assume that they did not realize how *essential* fast delivery is to us in 2015. Not unlike US booksellers (who are having a nice comeback) we too relied on the US wholesalers and their ability to ship frequently from warehouses with massive inventories. We don't have anything of this scale in Canada. In the US, if a publisher is slow

to get sudden bestsellers (and also the titles from the long tail that almost nobody stocks) to stores, the wholesaler nicely fills the gap to keep the bookseller in the game. In Canada, we're now hooped and we simply won't have the product available just when the consumer wants it. I am pretty certain the Canadian arm of Amazon and the Indigo warehouse is putting pressure on publishers to ensure stock is readily available in their warehouses, but independents (small and large) are missing similar warehousing opportunities probably because the Canadian market is too small over such a large landscape. If so (because I do understand business principles), and in the absence of being able to get books to stores in under a week, publishers could choose to temporarily lose some profit by crediting back the margin the retailer lost when buying from the US wholesaler.

The effective gross income the publisher would get from the retailer works out to about 45% compared to say the 56% they would have received if the retailer had purchased direct. There is a lot of math and some assumptions made to get to this number (I used a retail price that was 30% higher than the US and the dollar worth .70 cents). This solution might be plausible, if it's a small percentage of the overall, in order to satisfy special order demand that is so very important. It would be relatively easy to administer.

Other solutions would be to allow a major US wholesaler (if they were interested) to open a Canadian warehouse or make a deal with an existing warehouse such as Amazon's Richmond, BC facility (as scary as that sounds on the surface) to fulfill single-title orders but at normal wholesaler discounts. That being said, any solution needs to be tested against the unintended consequences that inevitably arise. The goal, and not unlike US wholesalers, is to carry nearly everything the publisher has and be able to get it to the store (and thus consumer) in a couple of days or so.

There's no question that online book shopping will continue to challenge the physical retailer's viability. Unfortunately, there is really only one company doing most of that business, and I doubt that any publisher would accept that to be healthy for their future. To counter this serious problem in the US, physical retailers have the opportunity to get millions of titles to their customers just as fast as their online competitor; perhaps something their publishers realized was essential and therefore stepped up with.

However, encouraging Canadian retailers to stay in the game (or even grow like the US market) might be difficult if we are to go back to the 80's way of doing business while our most venerable competition is allowed to be light years ahead in terms of selection, speed of delivery and consistent service levels.

Gift Cards

We will be sending you some detailed information about the benefits of Gift Cards. I recently did some analysis on the data we store and learned that these are important little gems for stores of all sizes. If you don't have gift cards yet this would be a good time to start and boost sales and profit, plus add a nice touch to your store's brand.

Calendars

In the past six months Mosaic sold 1,309 titles, 3884 units and \$56,842 at an average 46% margin for \$29,788 in profit that represents 6.1% of our overall gross profit (pew). We are in clear-out mode now

offering 50% off wall and daily ones and 25% off planners but the margins are still reasonable because we strive for 60% off and better on the initial buy. Prior to Christmas we have traditionally done some discounting (20% off or buy 2 get a 3rd free) but after speaking to some other booksellers who have tried both discounting and not, we think that discounting before Christmas might not actually boost sales enough to warrant the margin loss. We will likely do less pre-Christmas discounts next year to see if we can maintain sales and further increase profits. For us, I think having a big selection is the key, and that does require discounting after Christmas to clear the remaining stock QUICKLY. Wall and daily calendars are popular gifts, engagement calendars are more of a personal buy, and people come in for them after Christmas once they realize their old one is done. This is why we only do 25% off that format, and it seems we never have much left over anyway.

Let us know if you are interested in boosting this category as we are currently negotiating terms with some publishers by purchasing as a group.

Adult Jigsaw Puzzles

We sell Ravensburger and Cobble Hill (Outset Media). And we can't seem to carry enough (up 55% over last year). Unlike the puzzles for kids, we stock mostly the adult 500 and 1000 piece puzzles and use a folding table (with a nice tablecloth) to stack them as high as possible (messy works better than tidy). From October to January we sold over 600 units at \$12,000. Both companies accept smaller orders because space is always an issue (the excess is stored under the table). Puzzles sell after Christmas so you don't have to do markdowns. You don't have to be a kids store to sell puzzles and adults will get to know you for having them.

Stortz Toys

Stortz is a new company for us (thanks to tips shared when talking to other booksellers) and they have some really interesting toys. In particular, they have a line of putty (called Thinking Putty) that sells well if you have demos available for people to touch at the front counter.

Bargain Books (and the importance of bargain price labels)

What more can I say (apparently, lots)? You've read my sermon on this many times and some of you have taken the plunge and also called me to say thanks for making their future bright. Bottom line? There are fantastic books out there that all categories of bookstores can sell. You will sell more copies than usual and make more profit on every title. You will tie up less of your cash. Your customers will be amazed and come back looking for more. We've developed ways in BookManager to find the books suitable for your store. You just need to stray from the way you've bought books in the past.

Can I sell bargain books at full price? If there are no marks on the spine then of course that's your right and your customers will not know any difference. But it's likely the books will have a black mark on them to prevent returns to the publisher for full credit. Set your price at whatever your market will accept. We generally use 50% off but many times we don't need to depending on the demand or scarcity of the subject matter.

Do I order the same quantity as new books? This is probably the biggest mistake newbies make. You buy two, sell two within a month and then say, "that was easy". On certain titles you will be amazed at how you can sell dozens of copies on a title that would normally sell only a couple. The problem here is if you never explore beyond the norm, you will never know this. I see this all the time when I connect with stores and we go over their success. The bookseller is happy to report they sold 60% of their shipment in two months AND made 60% margin, but they sold out of many great titles within days of receiving the shipment.

Not ordering frequently enough? This problem is way too common. With bargain book suppliers in Canada like Book Depot and Strathearn (two great suppliers we deal with), the real game is to immediately start placing pending reorders in BookManager as soon as they start moving (of course we drool at you US booksellers who can send small orders without facing the huge costs to ship and broker them). Many of these titles will still be available as bargain and this is your chance to now step on it and double and triple up. What's the risk? You might have to mark them down when the party is over. Big deal! The next bus has arrived and ready to be your next gem, if you have the space. Over time you will become more confident in the initial buy and test the boundaries by ordering ten or twenty copies the first time. Now you are learning to make this side of the business pay!

Failing to do the Markdowns. This is another big mistake. If a book is still on the shelf after six months it needs to disappear! The old mantra, "your first markdown is your last markdown", is important. The sooner you can get rid of the slow movers the sooner you will be able to buy more of what's now selling fast. Most of us do not fully understand the mechanics behind inventory turns but let's forget the science and just be aware that your bargain stock needs to go if it's been on the shelf for more than a few months. Those turns will automatically improve and you can now brag that you're a genius at math.

Use Price Labels. The skeptics will read into this as Michael's sly way of selling more labels to pay for his boat gas in the summer on the Lake Okanagan. You are partly right (boat gas is expensive!) but, in order to manage bargain books, labels are the answer. If you consider that one hour of your time at \$15 is the same as 1,500 labels, how long does a roll last compared to the time saved by using labels. Use labels and then give yourself a raise.

Our method of receiving bargain books involves scanning the book, verifying the quantity, cost and retail and then auto-printing labels. We receive a dozen or so books this way before tearing off the strip of labels and affixing them in the same order we handles them. It's accurate, fast and provides a nice big SALE price on the label that has is specially designed to highlight the price in green. The green label differentiates bargain stock from regular, it has the bargain ISBN in the bar code to eliminate the need to choose between regular and remainder at the POS (and reduce errors) and it has the date code and quantity received for markdowns. Finally, and essential in our mind, when it comes time to reconcile inventory, you simply scan the bar codes rather than stopping to continually choose which book you just scanned.

The next time you order labels, ask to have a roll of the green labels swapped for a regular roll so that you can experiment.

Your Webstore

As part of our strategy to better balance our revenues against the services we provide, the consumer visibility of your webstore is now \$249 per year plus a small percentage of the orders placed if you are lucky enough to exceed a threshold of \$10,000. Hopefully, you don't all bail on this ongoing project by cancelling this service because we think it's essential to at least spend \$250 a year to keep your store visible with a basic website. The order threshold does not include any orders placed by yourself for your store and we are prepared to make adjustments for those kooky orders placed by unscrupulous people and robots. A handful of stores have been able to make decent progress attracting many orders via their site and we think it's fair to proportion some of the site's ongoing development and maintenance costs, once orders pass the \$10,000 threshold.

Of course your webstore is really two things in one. It's partly needed to advertise your business and tell customers you have stock but it's increasingly becoming an integral part of your daily inventory management. So long as your basic support is current, the latter will be always part of your BookManager system even if you choose not to make it visible to your customers.

Our research shows that many of Mosaic's regular customers use the site to see if we have a title in stock. This is where it will provide the most value for your customers. A much smaller percentage of customers will actually place orders, and these will be a mixture of reserving what's in stock for pickup or requesting us to order something we don't have. If you are doing a reasonable amount of school business the site is a godsend for librarians and can generate a lot of sales if you can encourage them to investigate the advantages. We do almost no business shipping orders to customers, and we are glad of that because we are not setup for it and it just takes too much effort.

Listing your in-store events on the site is important. But don't expect anyone to discover the event through your site because 99% of your customers are not on your site every week. However, when they do hear about the event through the media or social media they often want to get the details to confirm the time and location. They will Google search your store name, find your site and expect to see the event (big or small) on the home page. The changes we made last year should make it a bit easier to quickly put something up even though you may be otherwise hopeless at managing the site. This area is where we need to work with you in the coming year. With more staff here at our office we intend to teach you enough to establish a routine. As soon as you know an event will be happening you will create a new home page item, add the title(s), give it a headline and time, etc. Then, set the start and end dates for when it's to be visible on the home page and you should be done in ten minutes or less.

Even before posting events, you may want to give us a call and ask if we can do a basic makeover of the site with some good colours, the right size logo, a little text about the store, maybe a couple of photos and then some titles that are easily or automatically updated to keep it looking current. We do not have the resources to continually maintain your site but we hope the \$250 you pay to have the site working will allow us to help you get started.

Your Mobile Webstore

More and more people are using their phones instead of a computer to find information. This year we are focusing on making a mini version your site effective on a phone. People are usually looking for your business hours and location. Google is doing an amazing job of this (and by doing so they have decimated the business directory industry!). If you have not done so already, use your phone and a friend's computer to seek your business (because Google already has your computer tagged as a regular at your store) and then also look up some other bookstores. If Google is not able to show your store's phone, location and hours, then this needs to be made a priority (even before a website). There is no cost and therefore no salesperson calling you to do this, but it's critical. If you are hopeless in this area, pay someone (in lieu of paid Yellow Page advertising costs) for the little amount of time they will need to get you listed properly.

Now, as far as making your website useful on a phone I think that people will most often just want to look up a book that a friend or the media told them about. We want to make the search very simple, show the title, and, if you have stock we want them to click "Hold a copy for me" which will require giving only a name and phone number much like is done when someone phones the store. No "create an account" or "forgot your password", just enough information to set aside the book for a short period of time (we call them day holds). For the books not picked up you will have the option of calling them back or just putting the stock back on the shelf. Eventually and ideally, the request should come into a phone at the store (or an on-screen popup) so that it's immediately attended to, and then a text message back to confirm or a phone call to handle exceptions.

Finally, I don't ever expect that your online presence will become a significant portion of direct sales (unless you are very specialized), however, we are putting energy into this area because it is a marketing and customer service part of the business that is now essential to the physical store's ability to sell more. No, it's not time to retire just because you are lost in this area. You simply need a bit of help. I own a bookstore but I am a terrible book buyer. I have fantastic help for that. Please participate and support us along the way.

Faster Catalogue ordering

We are sending out a more detailed email on this new feature. Your webstore now allows you to choose a specific supplier so that their stock availability and a box for ordering is part of every title shown on a page. This simple change will make it much easier for you to work with catalogues, backlist and remainder buying.

Windows 10

Suffice to say that Window 10 appears to be working fine. I recently switched from 7, bypassing that confusing and awful version 8.

New Features in BookManager

The old gal just keeps chugging along and we continue to add bits and pieces to add new features and ensure it remains current with the versions of Windows. We just added digital certification (a whopping \$700 for two years authentication) to make the nagging warnings of "potentially harmful software" less

of a nuisance. That's the sort of stuff you need not be concerned with but it is part of our life. And, just because I also don't understand some of the latest in technology, I ain't retiring simply because I have great people helping me.

New look for Electronic Receiving with the added ability to do carton-level receiving

Receiving large multi-piece shipments can be challenging if you are limited with space. If you generate labels at the end of receiving instead of scanning as you go like we do, the huge alphabetical list of labels can take considerable time to match with the books. If a box or two of a shipment has yet to arrive, it can be messy to receive part of a shipment. Then there is Hachette (oh, Hachette) and their confusing system of generating six hundred invoices for one shipment.

Carton-level receiving can solve these challenges. Some of your suppliers are capable of sending "Advance Ship Notices" (an ASN or 856) that identifies the books contained in each carton. Each box is assigned a unique bar code affixed to the shipping label. At the start of receiving you scan this bar code instead of entering the invoice number. The books inside the box will then be displayed. Next, you process the carton just like you would an electronic invoice. The invoice(s) involved will be updated but will not be complete (balanced) until all cartons are received. We use the **X**tra option to scan in, reconcile and label the carton of books, but you can also print labels for the bunch. If you prefer to generate all labels for a shipment, and if the supplier has provided the ASN, then you can receive the entire shipment by invoice number and then have the batch of labels printed so they can be grouped by carton rather than alphabetical by title. Each set of labels is then put with the matching cartons to allow you to gradually receive the shipment, by opening just one box at a time. After experimenting with the different methods, we found that scanning and receiving each carton was only more efficient for shipments of more than three cartons.

Using carton-level receiving for Hachette offered the best improvement. Rather than spend half your day separating books into piles matching each of the six hundred invoices they generated, we receive each carton and then review the totals of all the invoices created to ensure everything received matches the invoices to be paid. Let's just say it's better than before, but for the love of god Hachette, can you please put the books onto one invoice?

At this time, we can only receive-by-carton from Penguin Random, Harper Collins and Hachette. It may require a customer service call to each company to have the ASN sent along with invoices. In other words, it seems nothing is ever easy. Unless you are overwhelmed with large shipments on a regular basis my guess is that the old way of receiving using electronic invoices will be easier for those of you who are less technically savvy and not eager to be the first to jump into these new procedures.

When I started this project in Spring 2015 I was naive to the internal complexity of matching cartons to invoices, and the strange way books, cartons, and invoices are to be connected (the design team should have been shot). Sometimes, special orders of the same title will be in multiple cartons, which adds an extra level of complexity to ensure everything still gets assigned to the right place throughout the process. Alas, I was too committed to the project by then, and so I persevered to make things work in

both the new and old ways. The screens are much different, there are some cool new features that you will discover, but there is no escaping that your receivers will be a bit surprised when they see change and scream "why?". This is the reason we did not release any new BookManager versions during the Christmas season. We recognized that you needed no disruption during the busiest time of the year. Instead, I just threw Mosaic's crew into the pit during the peak season, except I was on hand to guide them and fix the unanticipated issues.

By Friday, January 22nd, carton level receiving will be released with the latest version of BookManager, and we'll be sending out more detailed instructions on how it works with this week's News, Sales & Tips email.

Integrating Credit and Debit Cards with BookManager's POS

Your choice of card processing companies is limited to; a) Chase Paymentech and, b) None. That said their rates are comparable when you are linked with an association like RCC or CFIB. Integrating credit card processing with BookManager's POS is another way to save time and frustration and also make your customers happy.

BookManager sends the total of the purchase to the card device. Your customer inserts or taps their card and in a blink BookManager prints the receipt and tenders the sale to the correct payment type (Debit, Visa, MCard, etc). We no longer spend any time reconciling BookManager to the card transactions because they are always in sync. That was easy! At our busiest times, the lineups moved faster.

That said, Chase just sent me a letter explaining their new rates (they must have gotten wind of BookManager's notice on prices, ha). Among other changes, it looks like the new tap-to-pay will cost you a few additional pennies unless you disable it and force your customers to use their pin.

Yes, it's happened folks; in less than one lifetime the technology gurus now rule the world and there is nothing we can do to stop them. Whoops, maybe I need to look in the mirror. But, I'll do my best not to be evil and maybe even sell my boat next year to save on gas and keep label prices low!

Happy New Year.... we love you all. I wanna see a 10% increase across the board, so sell some books, tell a story or two and put a smile (if they take a moment and look up from their stupid phones!) on your customer's face.

Michael Neill