



Session #617
Friends of Canadian Libraries
An Untapped Fundraising
Stream

Selling Used Books Online

Dorothy Macnaughton
President, Friends of Canadian Libraries



Selling Books Online

Why Sell Books Online?

- Expands your market
- Allows you to sell more books, including cancelled library books
- Produces better revenues for specialized books that can't be sold as easily locally
- Gives your Friends group or library greater exposure and can result in more donations and additional volunteers



Selling Books Online

TIPS

- Do your research
- Organize the people and tools you will need
- Make sure you have dedicated volunteers and/or staff willing to give this project the time it will take to succeed
- Train everyone well, even if it takes longer



Selling Books Online

- Most Popular Online Book Sellers
 - Amazon.com
 - eBay.com
 - Alibris.com
 - ABEBooks.com



Selling Books Online

How to Get Started

- Find volunteers who enjoy sorting books
- You may find sorters who already purchase books online and have some knowledge about online selling
- Train the volunteers about kinds of books to look for to sell online (see list in FOCAL booklet)
- Start with a few books that look promising
 - Check online book selling sites to see if those books are listed, how they are described, try to find the closest match and find out the value



Selling Books Online

What Books to Choose

- Begin with:
 - specialized books
 - older books (non-fiction especially)
 - books published by university publishing companies
 - newer textbooks
 - some hard cover first edition science fiction books, by well-known authors



Selling Books Online

What Books to Choose

- Older first edition Canadian authors; there may have been a smaller print run
- Hardcover books of authors like Margaret Atwood, Margaret Lawrence
- Signed editions
- Some war books
- Some older foreign language books



Selling Books Online

What Books to Choose

- Art books, often large coffee table books
- Books with unusual illustrations
- Children's books with illustrations by famous artists (e.g. Maurice Sendak)
- Limited edition or numbered books
- Books with unusual or leather bindings
- Books on African Americans and Native Americans and Canadians (from 1940s on)



Selling Books Online

- Choose books that are in good condition
- Look at “ABEBooks Glossary, Condition” to determine how to describe the book
- Include the condition of the book, with descriptions similar to those of other online booksellers
- State whether the book is a first edition, signed copy, ex-library, etc.



Selling Books Online

What is a First Edition?

A true first edition is the first printing of the first edition of the book.

There are excellent online resources that tell you how to identify first editions of books:

- Lazy Lion Used Books and More

<http://www.lazylionbooks.com/identifyingfirsts.htm>

- Empty Mirror

<http://www.emptymirrorbooks.com/collecting/firstedition.html>



Selling Books Online

Pricing Books

Price competitively, based on the condition of the book.

Look at what other book sellers are asking for the same book.

Don't forget to include the possible cost of shipping. If you are shipping internationally and shipping will be more expensive, work that out with the purchaser.



Selling Books Online

Logistics of Selling

- Determine which company you will partner with; some are more realistic if you have only a small number of books to sell; others are better for bigger operations
- Set up a separate bank account
- Determine how your customers will pay for their purchases, after careful research and consultation with the company you have selected



Selling Books Online

Logistics of Selling

- Create a dedicated e-mail address for your online sales
- Keep track of what item sold to whom and when it was shipped.
- Make sure payment is received before shipping the book.
- Compiling your list of books for sale, with description and price takes a fair amount of time, but makes it easier to keep track.



Selling Books Online

- Books should be shipped out within 1 to 2 days after the order is received.
- Volunteers will be needed to package and ship orders.
- Other volunteers can keep the listings up to date.
- Someone will need to be available to answer questions by phone.
- Make sure you have clear return policies in place.



Selling Books Online

Packing and Shipping Books

- Check your e-mail before you ship the order, in case the customer has changed their mind.
- Include the record of sale.
- Make sure packaging is waterproof.
 - Use bubble-lined mailers (good for softcover books)
 - Use packing tape over the address label
 - Can also wrap in plastic wrap, cardboard and plastic covering on the outside



Selling Books Online

Packing and Shipping Books

Canada Post and Courier Services can give you estimates of postal rates for a book of a certain weight for different countries.

You may want to insure books of higher value.

Look into customs regulations if you decide to ship books internationally.



Selling Through Better World Books

Many of the books you choose to send to Better World Books would be discarded

Somewhat less labour intensive, still takes time to scan bar codes into the computer

Realize 15% of what the book actually sells for

<http://www.betterworldbooks.com/Info-Discards-Donations-Program-m-4.aspx>



Conclusion

Thanks to Sally Reed of the Association of Libraries, Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations (ALTAFF) in the U.S. for allowing FOCAL to use some of their materials on which to base the booklet FOCAL has created for Canadian Friends and libraries.

Special thanks to Jane Rutledge of the Friends of the Akron-Summit Public Library who was extremely helpful and generous with her time. Their Friends group have been selling books online very successfully for 8 years.



Conclusion

- Friends of Canadian Libraries (FOCAL)

Available from FOCAL:

Manual on How to Form Your
Friends of the Library Group