



## AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein  
April 20, 2007

***“We love books and don’t worry if a few sneak through, but please...No mold. No mildew or cigarette odor. No caked-on dust. No teeth marks...”***

-Guidelines for book selling from Books by Chance ([www.booksbychance.com](http://www.booksbychance.com))

I recently attended a Friends of the Albany Library business meeting. One of the agenda topics was the monthly report of the online book sales. I knew some books were being sold this way, but up to now I had never given it much thought. The report included a list of the 23 books sold and it was fascinating to see what sells well. In general, non-fiction seems to do better and the topics are varied, to say the least. The books that brought in the most money for March included *Problems in Electrodynamics*, *Erte at Ninety: The Complete Graphics*, and *Jesus the Magician: Charlatan or Son of God?*

After the meeting I took a look online to see what else I could find out about this. Were other Friends groups doing this? Where do they sell? Who offers services like this for libraries? One business that does this is Books by Chance, based in Ann Arbor Michigan. This friendly organized site gives a step-by-step guide to selling books, CDs and DVDs on consignment. They pick up

the materials, appraise them, keep the ones they think will sell, offer to donate or return the others, and immediately list them on Amazon.com and other sites. Sometimes they will refuse an entire batch books, especially when the items are: “A box of books that smells bad because it has sat in a damp basement or garage too long; several bags of very old and beat-up paperbacks; several hundred romance novels.”

Their guide for what does sell echoes what I learned at the Friends meeting: “Non-fiction in general, very current fiction, college books, textbooks less than years old, technical books, CDs and DVDs, any book with an ISBN and if it has a barcode even better, slightly esoteric is good, popular but not too popular.”

The Foundation and Friends of the Santa Clara City Library has added online sales to its website. Volunteers sort through the donated books, as well as pricing them, processing the orders and shipping. They use Alibris.com to host their

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used book sales. According to the website, they expect to sell several thousand books through their website this year.

The Friends of the Library of El Dorado County use Amazon.com to list their books, but buyers can arrange to pick the books up at their main library to avoid shipping charges.

I also found a recent online discussion started by Sally Reed, Executive Director of FOLUSA (Friends of the Library USA). The question she put out was how many of the Friends groups are using a third party to sell their books through the Internet and how much do they pay for this service. The groups who do use a third party seem to all pay 1/2 of the proceeds for this service. Others use volunteers, so that 100% of the profits go to the libraries. It is great to read their discussions about this, especially the tips on what sells and what doesn't. Some never sell library discards, others always do. One tip

was from someone in Lafayette, Indiana, who says: “By the way, if your library withdraws its Scott postage stamp catalogues every year to replace them with new ones, check out the prices on eBay. A year-old or 2-year-old set easily brings you over \$50. Often well over.”

It is inspiring to see the Friends in action. They examine, sort and organize donated books, turning them into much needed funds for their libraries. Adding online sales to annual booksales, Friends stores and ongoing sale shelves is a good example of the creativity, dedication and hard work of these groups.

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