

Booksellers' Advice on Fraud...

"One thing we've found as the 'tell' (other than addresses not matching) is that the email address on questionable orders is often very unusual and/or nonsensical...not in a creative sort of way, more like a computer generated sort of way." e.g.:

bWaiaNghu@outlook.com

ffabianqkuykendalliv17@outlook.com

hJimmyiSchachergs@outlook.com

nCynthialSmithbp@outlook.com

pjamesrjohnsonut1987@outlook.com

smarlingoodeka@outlook.com

- Books, Inc., CA

"The 'Fraudulent Orders' help page really covers everything we consider. I think the main things we purposefully look at in each order to avoid fraud are the ship-to and bill-to names and the email address. It's easy to scan those real quick on every order. And we notice the warnings that IndieCommerce shows about the addresses and IP addresses.

We're already looking at the ordered products on the orders when we process them, so if anything's weird there (usually multiple copies of expensive text books) we'll hopefully spot it when we're processing the order.

If we're certain an order is fraudulent, we'll just cancel it outright, and if we're not sure we call the phone number to check it out.

Most of it's just intuition now for most of the people at my store who handle the website orders... We've all been working here for at least a couple years and know what kind of things usually sell, and anytime something unusual sells, we look a little harder at the order."

- Book Culture, NY

"We have found the ABA's 'Red Flags' information useful, and have adapted it to fit our contexts. For instance, we regularly have a lot of new or first-time customers, and many of our customers, both new and returning, have IP addresses that are not in our area, including international orders.

We also compare the shipping and billing addresses, but that, in itself, is not a huge flag for us, since many customers buy gifts, and many government employees have permanent addresses in other states but ship locally, or vice versa.

We look for things like inverted first-names and last-names, or spelling anomalies between the billing and shipping names.

We also look for suspicious emails—emails with a different name or misspelled name, Hotmail or yahoo email address that use an alias instead of a name, or uncommon domain names like @163.net.

We now hold and double check any credit card that fails more than twice, or any non-US issued credit card.

Once we put these extra credit card checks in place, the fraudulent orders dropped for a while, then they started using fraudulent PayPal accounts. Because PayPal is harder to trace it's linked so closely with eBay accounts, we have now disabled PayPal entirely.

As far as specific books to look out for, we've seen a range of orders, from bestsellers like Michelle Obama's *Becoming* and Tara Westover's *Educated*, to bestselling cookbooks like *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat*. However, we also suddenly had a lot of people ordering Dungeons and Dragons-related books, and titles from the Percy Jackson series.

When in doubt, we call the customers, and we do often ask if they've purchased directly from us or from a third party like eBay or Amazon. If they say yes, we ask them to send us any receipt or email they've received, and we add that to the information we give to the FBI.”

Politics & Prose, DC