

ABA 2022 Annual Report

Helping Bookstores Thrive since 1900

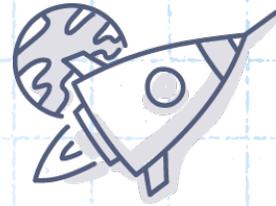


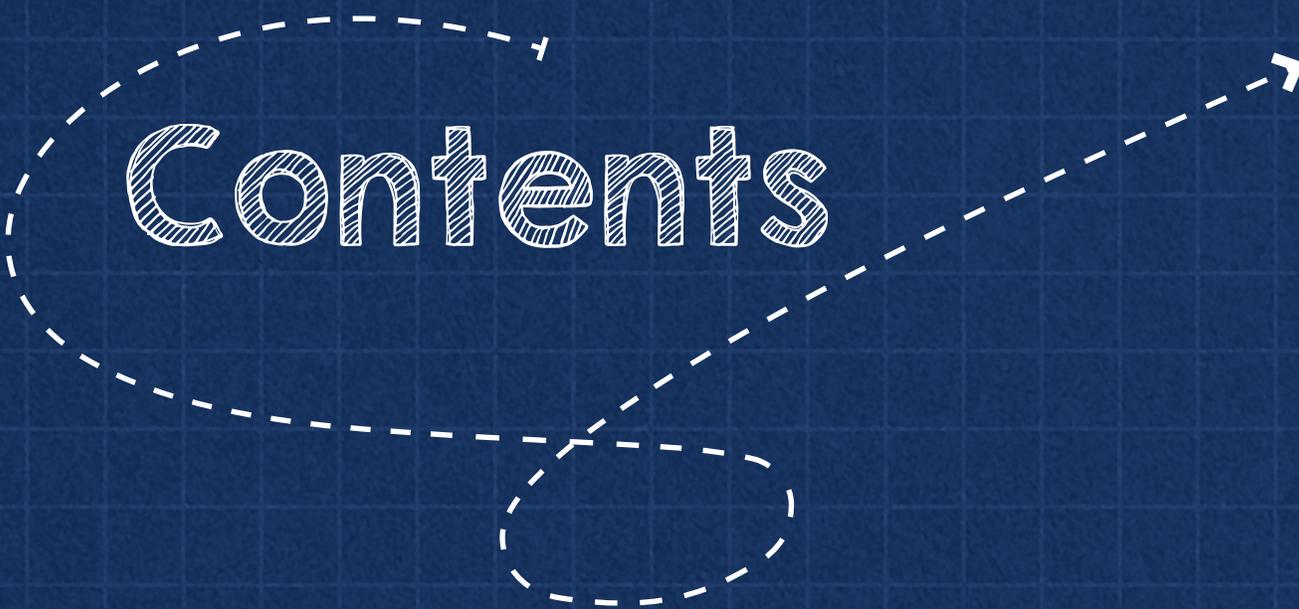
American Booksellers Association



ABA's Mission

**ABA works
every day
to help
independent
bookstores
across the
U.S. survive
and thrive.**





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Letter from Allison Hill, CEO



Dear Members,

2022 was a year of incredible growth for the indie channel and ABA was honored to play a role in supporting and championing your stores.

Independent bookstores continued to demonstrate remarkable resilience, adaptability, creativity, and passion. Most of you experienced sales above pre-pandemic levels and many of you grew – expanding, adding second locations, growing and evolving from a pop-up or mobile store to a brick and mortar store, or vice versa. The indies rocked it in 2022. In our annual publisher meetings this month we heard again and again that in a year when national accounts were down, indies were “a bright spot.”

**“2022 was a year of
incredible growth for
the indie channel...”**

And like the Ann Richards’ quote about Ginger Rogers doing everything Fred Astaire did, only backwards and in heels, you accomplished it all despite an uneven playing field as Amazon continued its reign as an unchecked monopoly.

2022 was incredibly challenging as pandemic issues continued and new ones emerged. As I visited your stores it was amazing to see that even with those challenges, your businesses survived and in many cases thrived, and you all were able to preserve the magic that is independent bookstores.

I hope that ABA played a small part in that.

In 2022 ABA brought over 800 of you together for Snow Days 2022, ABA’s biggest virtual event to date. After a 2-year hiatus, we finally returned in person with the 2022 Children’s Institute in Phoenix followed by a virtual Children’s Institute. In between, the year was filled with virtual education meetups, webinars, trainings, and ShopTalks that we hope provided you with skills, education, and community.

In 2022 ABA continued our unwavering fight for a level playing field: meeting with the FTC, presenting ABA's white paper to attorneys general, lobbying for the American Innovation and Choice Online Act, and more.

In 2022 ABA battled book bans and the current threats to the First Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment, and Democracy. Through American Booksellers for Free Expression, ABA's free expression initiative, ABA supported members, filed legal challenges, wrote letters, rallied booksellers, launched advocacy campaigns, and provided members with resources. This week, ABA will make an announcement about an important next step in our work to protect the right to read.

In 2022 our 26 developers completed 100% of the Tier One and 75% of the Tier Two IndieCommerce 2.0 development work and the first stores were migrated to the platform. The IndieCommerce team has continued to support the existing platform while moving this significant investment in the future of e-commerce for the indies forward.

And this is just some of what ABA did in 2022 to help your stores survive and thrive.

Thank you to those who indicated that you valued ABA's work last year by renewing your membership. Over the past three years, ABA membership has grown by 36%.

These numbers coupled with the exciting news that 173 brick & mortar, 42 pop-ups, and 10 mobile independent bookstores opened in 2022 validate my assertion that The Future Is Indie.

ABA wants to not only support you in that future, but help make it possible.

In a time when too many individuals are focused on taking books out of readers' hands, your work putting books in people's hands is more important than ever.

Thank you for the honor of supporting that work.

—Allison K Hill, CEO

“The 173 brick & mortar, 42 pop-ups, and 10 mobile independent bookstores that opened in 2022 validate my assertion that **The Future Is Indie.”**



Indies by the Numbers

The State of the Independent Bookstore

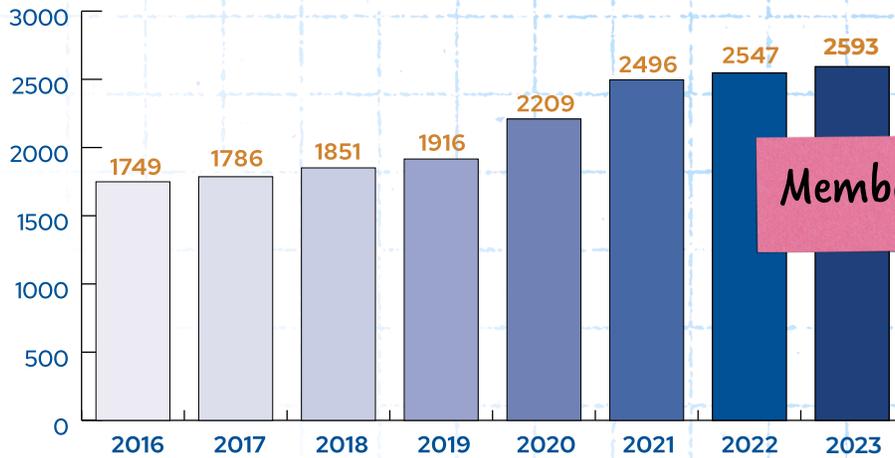
Contrary to the pervasive rumor that independent bookstores are closing in great numbers, the following statistics show a very different trend...



Breakdown



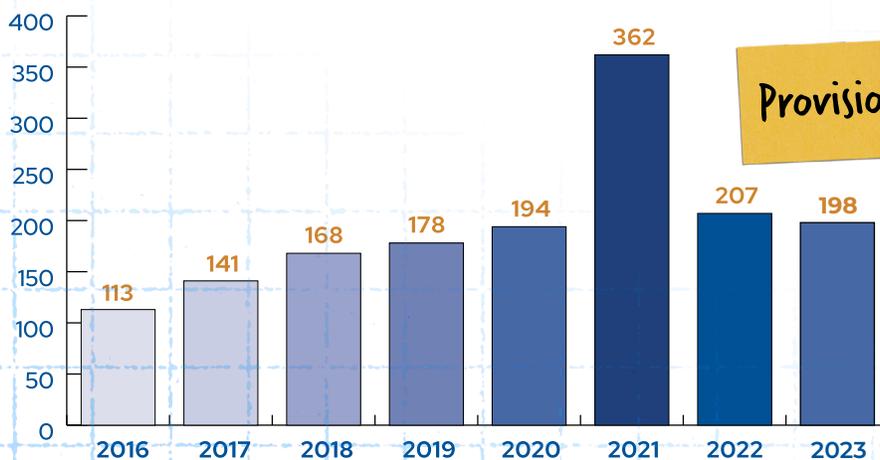
Membership



Bookstore companies



Provisional members





ABACUS

2022 marked the highest participation in history for ABACUS, ABA’s financial benchmarking report for independent bookstores. ABACUS helps stores see how they compare to other stores and identify areas to improve profitability. ABA provided education at Fall Shows to highlight ways to use ABACUS alongside a store’s P&L.

401

stores
participated
in 2022

12%

increase from
previous
report



Indies First

November 26, 2022

ABA’s national campaign in support of independent bookstores, in conjunction with Small Business Saturday, celebrated its 10th anniversary!

**Author Celeste Ng
became ABA’s first
Indie Ambassador!**

“I love independent bookstores because to me they are centers of community. They are places where I get to meet new people and encounter new ideas in the pages. I always walk out with some idea or some fresh perspective that I hadn’t found before.”

-Celeste Ng
Author and 2022 Indies
First Ambassador



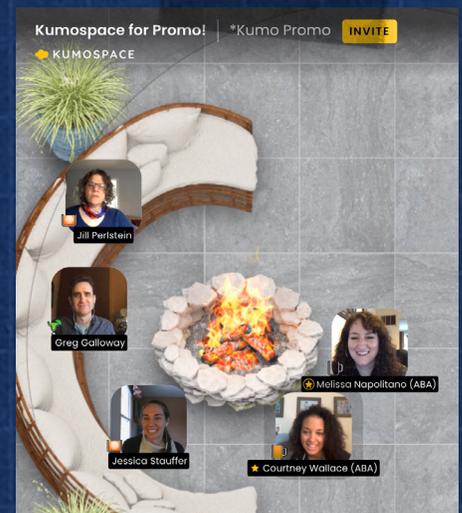
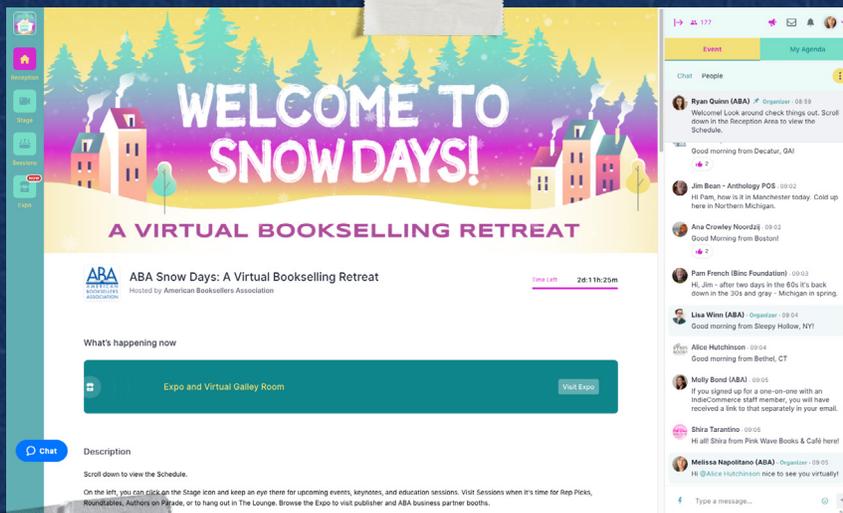
Education, Inspiration + Support: Strengthening our Community



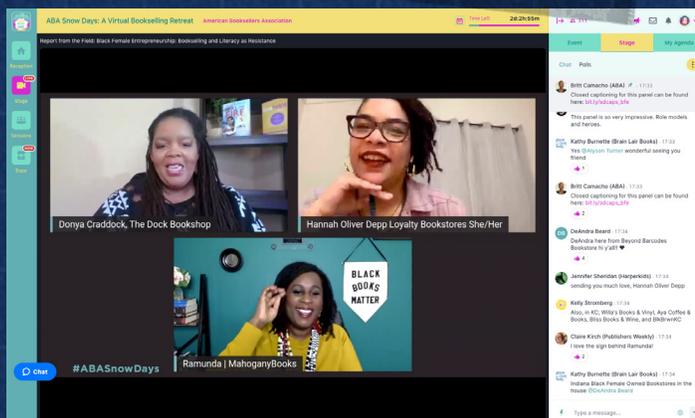
ABA Snow Days: A Virtual Bookselling Retreat

March 8-10, 2022

ABA's largest virtual Institute to date with 888 booksellers attending for educational sessions, networking, and a virtual galley room following the last-minute Wi2022 cancellation due to rising COVID cases.



Following an amazing interview with Donya Craddock of The Dock Bookshop, Alicia Keys visited with all attendees in our virtual breakout rooms.



Spring Regional Forums

April-May, 2022

ABA celebrated the beginning of spring with booksellers at Spring Forums.



Independent Bookstore Day

April 30, 2022

ABA's national celebration of independent bookstores was the largest in Indie Bookstore Day history to date with 874 stores participating from all 50 states!

38% increase
from 2021





Angie Thomas
@angiectomas

So honored to be the #IndieBookstoreDay Ambassador this year. Indie bookstores are near and dear to me, and I look forward to spreading the word about their awesomeness 🥰

IndieBound @indiebound · Mar 18, 2022
We're thrilled to share that our 2022 #IndieBookstoreDay Ambassador is...

#1 New York Times bestselling author @angiectomas!

We're so excited to celebrate with you Saturday, April 30. 📖 Check out our searchable map & start planning your day! indiebound.org/ibd-map

ANGIE THOMAS
Independent Bookstore Day 2022 Ambassador
#IndieBookstoreDay

#BookstoreSpiritWeek

Children's Institute 2022

June 20-22, 2022

Over 500 people attended ABA's first in-person Institute since COVID to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Children's Institute.





Fall Regional Trade Shows

September & October, 2022

ABA was happy to be back on the road in full force talking with members and visiting stores.



Banned Books Week

September 18-24, 2022

Over 600 member stores signed up to receive ABA's I Read Dangerously kits, including displays, materials, and digital resources.



ABA Takes on

In 2022, American Booksellers for Free Expression, ABA's free expression initiative, worked nonstop to combat the wave of book bans and legislation that threatened the right to read. Here are some highlights of that work:

- Assisted a bookseller who was threatened with legal action for selling T-shirts with a QR code that links to a list of banned books.
- Joined with others to sign an amici in support of Barnes & Noble in its case in opposition to a case arguing that *Gender Queer* and *A Court of Mist and Fury* are obscene. In September, the Virginia Beach judge tossed the complaint.
- Co-signed 44 National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) letters in opposition to schools seeking to restrict access to books for students, either directly or via changes to policy. [View the letters on BookWeb.](#)
- Condemned the attack on famed author Salman Rushdie and bookseller Henry Reese at an event in Chautauqua, New York, on Friday, August 12. Rushdie is the author of *The Satanic Verses*, a novel which prompted the leader of Iran to call for Rushdie's death in 1989.
- David Grogan, Director of ABFE, Advocacy and Public Policy, moderated a New Voices New Rooms (NVNR) virtual panel session, *Banned Books*, which focused on the fight to keep literature accessible to all – especially children.
- Started a phased rollout of communications actions beginning with a banned books petition collecting 1,700+ bookseller signatures.
- Created an "I Read Dangerously" T-shirt and tattoos ([sold on Bonfire](#)) to support the work of ABFE, ABA's free speech initiative.
- Along with 25 other organizations, joined the American Library Association's (ALA) *Unite Against Book Bans* campaign. The campaign's goal is to raise awareness about the recent rise in book challenges in public libraries and schools and to empower readers everywhere to push back against censorship.

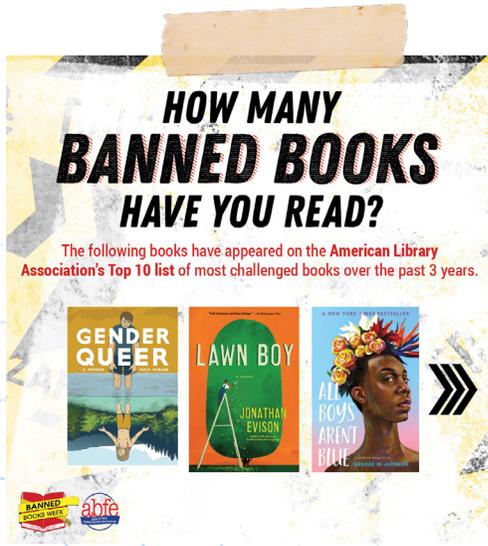
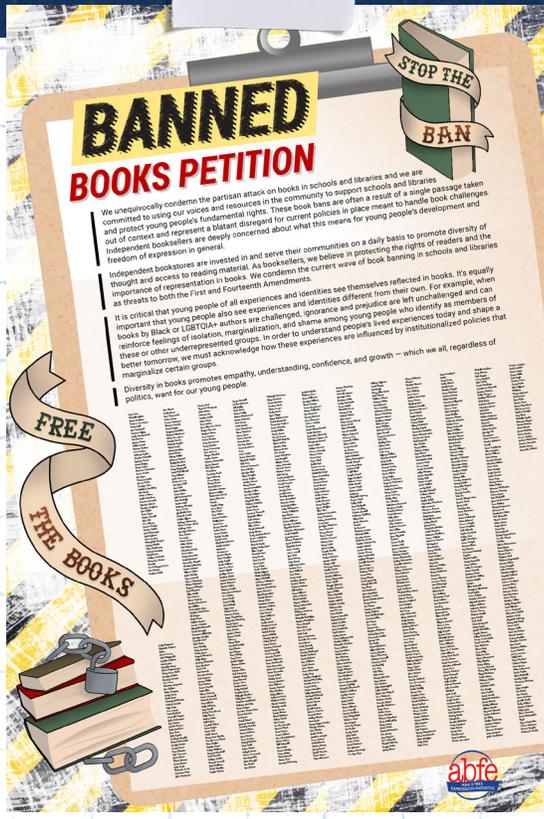


Banned Books

➤ **Joined the Missouri ACLU amicus on behalf of two school children and two NAACP affiliates (on behalf of their members, including students and parents of students in the Wentzville R-IV School District) to challenge the removal of eight critically acclaimed books from the school library, including *The Bluest Eye*, by Toni Morrison and *All Boys Aren't Blue*, by George M. Johnson.**

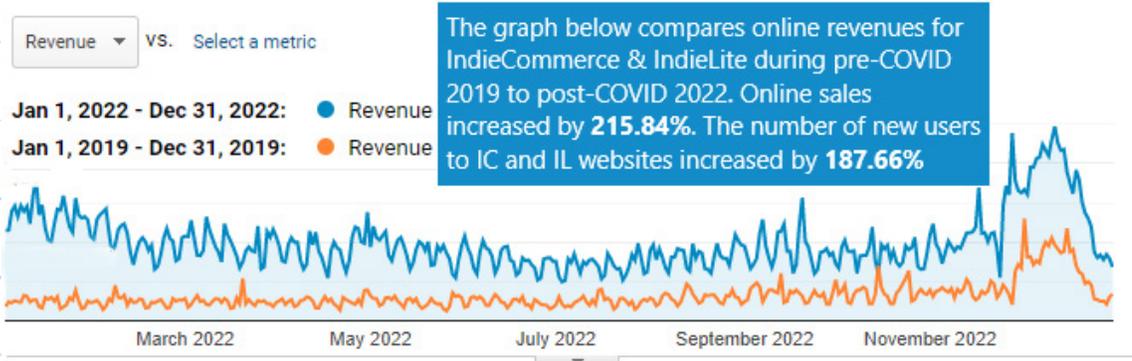
➤ **Partnered with the Media Coalition, the Kids' Right to Read Project, and the Banned Books Week Coalition. As part of these coalitions, ABFE participated in legal challenges to unconstitutional laws; sent letters to school districts that were attempting to remove books; and helped sponsor and organize Banned Books Week.**

➤ **Created new resources to help booksellers facing book bans in their communities including an asset to help booksellers educate customers about banned books and "9 Tips for Handling Trolls on Social Media."**



E-Commerce Solutions

In 2022, 26 developers worked on IndieCommerce 2.0 nonstop – writing code, testing, regression testing, and adding additional functionality as store needs evolved in the new pandemic world. All of this was accomplished while the IndieCommerce team also continued supporting the existing platform and users were kept up to date on progress through *BTW* and IndieCommerce.org blog posts like [this one](#). Tier Two testing and migration for existing IndieLite stores has now begun.



Ecommerce Conversion Rate
22.78% ↑



Transactions
209.17% ↑



Revenue
215.84% ↑



Avg. Order Value
2.16% ↑
\$45.98 vs \$45.01



Unique Purchases
242.69% ↑



Quantity
218.99% ↑



For more information about the IndieCommerce 2.0 timeline for 2023, stores may contact staff@bookweb.org and watch the [IndieCommerce.org](https://www.indiecommerce.org) blog for IC 2.0 migration updates.

for Booksellers

IndieCommerce Work in 2022



**Completed
Tier One
development**



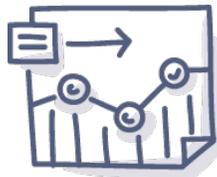
**Completed
migration of
test stores**



**Created
help docs**



**Updated
functionality**



**Upgraded GA4
for Google
Analytics 4**



**Launched
IndieCommerce.org
for users**

New Marketing Partners

General Motors 'STEM Reads'

September, 2022

ABA's grant proposal to General Motors for a STEMRead initiative resulted in a partnership with ABA, GM, and Candlewick to promote STEM and provide special partnership editions of *The Last Mapmaker* to participating independent bookstores to share with readers.



20,000

copies of *The Last Mapmaker* given to readers in underserved communities from indie bookstores

Good Morning America



This week's #GMABuzzPick is "The Other Mother" by @rachel_m.harper!

"We love this relatable, multigenerational story of human connection, loss, queerness and difficult decisions." — @seat_books

Follow #GMABookClub for more great reads: bit.ly/3t4uF4p



8:58 AM · Aug 5, 2022

ABA partnered with GMA throughout the year to showcase independent bookstores and book recommendations by indie booksellers.

Thank You

Thank you to all of the publishers, authors, poets, illustrators, wholesalers, distributors, and business partners who made ABA's work possible in 2022.

A special thanks to James Patterson and Book Industry Charitable Foundation (Binc) for their generous support of booksellers this year.

And thank you to Bookshop for generating \$5.6M for bookstores in 2022!

New + Continuous ABA Support

Here's What's New

EDUCATION

- **Management Book Club**
- **New Member Series:** Store Ownership 101 and Intro to ABA Benefits
- **ShopTalks**
 - General
 - Children's Bookselling Group
 - HR
 - Business Insurance
 - Independent Bookstore Day Brainstorming
- **ShopTalks for Small(ish), Nontraditional, and Various Models**
 - Mixed & Used Inventory
 - Nonprofit
 - Cooperative and Tourist Town Bookstores
 - Bookstores with cafés/restaurants/bars
- **ABA Open House/ABA Board Office Hours**
- **Marketing Meetups**
 - Bonfire
 - Holidays
 - Independent Bookstore Day
 - Mixed/Used Inventory
 - Email Newsletters
 - Offsite Events
 - Eventbrite
 - Customer Experience & Marketing Funnels
 - Audiobooks: Marketing & Driving Sales; Online Ads
- **Banned Books Bingo**
- **US Book Show 2022 Education:** Curation Through Partnerships with University Presses, and Tech Solutions for Store Operations
- **Advocacy/ABFE Webinars/Resources**
- **ABACUS Q&A**
- **ABA/AMIBA U.S. Small Business Administration Webinar**
- **Buzz Books**
 - Romance Editors Panel
 - Young Adult Editors Panel
 - Editors Panel
- **Technology Meetup**
 - Crowdcast
 - Edelweiss
 - IndieCommerce Webinar
 - Staff Scheduling Tools
 - Product Photography Tips and Tricks
 - Reporting Sales
 - Open Conversation
- **Strategic Planning Series**
- **Antiracism Series and Workshops**
- **Deescalation Training**
- **Donated to Professional Bookselling School to support its education program for bookstore owners and booksellers**

NEW BUSINESS SERVICES/ DISCOUNTS

- Bonfire
- Canva
- QuickBooks

RESOURCES

- “Welcome to Bookselling” Onboarding Resource
- Developing a Bookstore Business Plan
- Suggested Steps to Opening a Bookstore
- Banned Books Petition

MARKETING ASSETS

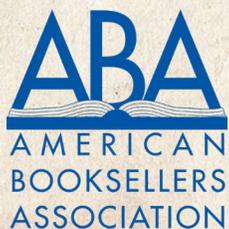
- Marketing & Social Media Calendar
- Jólábókaflóð Fall campaign
- Good Books Come to Those Who Shop Early campaign
- Get Out the Vote campaign
- #BoxedOut refresh
- 5 Ways Bookstores Can Fight Book Bans Infographic
- “Read Banned Books” infographic
- I Read Dangerously digital assets, T-shirts, and tattoos
- Indie Next List and Kids’ Next List social media visuals
- Veteran’s Day Member Bookstores graphic
- Snack, Nap, Read IndieBound poster

ABA Perennials

- Independent Bookstore Day
- Indies First
- Indies Introduce
- Next Lists
 - Indies Next List
 - Kids’ Next List
 - Reading Group Guide
 - Indie Gift Guide For Genre Lovers
 - Matchbook Marketing Email Program for Indie Customers
- Indie Bestseller List
- Boxed Mailing
- Best Books for Young Readers catalog
- Book Buyer’s Handbook
- Preorder Calendar

[View consolidated financials on BookWeb.org.](#)

For more information on ABA programs, contact **info@bookweb.org**.



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